This dissertation titled
How Superintendents Prepare School Districts for Change

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Abstract

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How Superintendents Prepare School Districts for Change

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This study was a quest toward understanding how superintendents prepare districts for change in response to various internal and external environmental forces. This study focuses within the area of change on aspects of the change readiness process. Finally, this study sought to answer questions regarding the aspects of a climate and specific strategies superintendents utilize that hinder or assist in preparing a district for change.

This research was a qualitative case study bounded by a shared experience. The informants consisted of a purposeful selection of maximum variation, four public school superintendents from Ohio. The four informants were identified and data were collected using the interview process. Saldana’s (2010) multi-cycle coding method was used to analyze the data.

Interpretation of the data revealed support for the three conditions of a climate included in Schein’s Model of Motivation to Change readiness phrase. Analysis of the interview data also revealed a number of strategies that assisted superintendents in preparing a district for change (persuasive communication, active participation, pacing, and discrepancy.) Lastly, various strategies were identified as hindering the process of preparing a district for change (personal support and discrepancy).
Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family who supported me through my journey.

I dedicate this work to my husband, Bob Main, for all he sacrifices to make my dreams become realities. I also dedicate this work to my children, Michael and Mary; I hope this journey inspires you to never stop searching for truth and knowledge.

Lastly, this work is dedicated in memory of my adoptive parents, Glendale and Juanita Kettell; they provided me a life filled with love and support. Because of their unconditional love, I am me.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Problem Statement

Historically, an educational reform movement serves to improve the quality of education and increase student outcomes through improved instructional practices (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Rowan, 1996). School reform holds educational organizations accountable bringing about competition amongst districts and subjecting the districts to public opinions (Brock, 2014). Although competition abstractly appears to be good, the idea of competition can negatively affect an environment where collaboration is meant to move teaching and learning forward. In addition, policies and sanctions caused by educational reform such as competitiveness amongst educators radiates into the surrounding communities. This radiating of negativity can pass through the community like an infectious disease; thus, causing chaos in both the school and community. Policies such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002) often bring accountability measures resulting in sanctions – generating financial burdens for school districts as well as community members; thus, becoming known as unfunded mandates.

Initiatives, mandates and new programs, are a large part of educational reform and movements to improve quality education in schools. As the state, district and community funnel fiscal resources toward school reform, scholars in the area of change research report that up to 70% of all new initiatives continue to fail (Beer & Nohria, 2000; Choi, 2011; Pellettiere, 2006; Smith, 2002; Soumyaja, Kamalanabhan, & Bhattacharyya, 2011). One study by IBM Global (2004) shows that as low as only 10% of all initiatives implemented in organizations are successful. According to these statistics from IBM
Global, almost three of four change initiatives fail. Therefore, it is plausible educators may verbalize phrases such as *this too shall pass* when referring to a new initiative. However, leaders must keep in mind that school districts are organizations and all organizations are open systems dependent upon its environment. Therefore, it is pertinent that school districts respond to changing environmental forces and needs.

Organizational change, or educational reform, is a priority for educational organizations across the nation. Unfortunately, an organization works toward its own demise by naturally gravitating towards stability rather than change. In other words, a school district strives to remain balanced rather than adjust to various environmental forces. However, when the environment changes but a school district remains unchanged, the needs of stakeholders remain unfulfilled, and state or federal mandates are not met. Researchers believe, however, that a change ready organization, such as a school district, can implement educational reform successfully.

The success of educational reform remains a concern for politicians, educators, parents, community members and students alike. Past studies in the area of educational reform indicate a positive relationship between organizational change readiness and successful implementation of initiatives or organizational change (Armenakis, Harris & Mossholder, 1993).

Past research affords us a sufficient amount of information within the area of change management to include: various change models, leadership practices, and guidelines to create a culture of change to assist in moving organizations from a current state to a new, improved state. In fact, consultants are often hired to assist in
implementing this process of moving an organization from a current state to an improved state within an organization. However, research is lacking twofold within the readiness phase of the change process. First of all, there is a lack of in-depth investigation into the area of change readiness describing the process a superintendent uses at the district level to prepare his or her organization for initiatives, mandates or educational reform. For purposes of this study, research in preparing a district for change is referred to as organizational change readiness. In addition, past educational reform research in the K-12 setting has normally focused on studies looking at the initiative or what is being changed. However, the research in this study views change readiness through a different lens.

Actually, this study views educational reform or organizational change through a couple different lenses. First, the research focuses on people, superintendents or educational leaders, leading the change process at the district level. Secondly, this research views change or educational reform through analysis of elements of a climate rather than focusing on an initiative or mandate. Lastly, this study uses an organizational view or a systems view of preparing the organizational climate at the district level rather than a programmatic view of implementation of an initiative or mandate.

**Purpose**

Many books and articles addressing the success of an organization are focused on continuity and stabilization of an entity rather than change (Burke, 2008). However, understanding change and change readiness are important factors for the success of any educational organization. Although organizational change and change readiness have
been explored in the past, we still have much to learn about how current initiatives and mandates in Ohio are changing our schools and districts. In addition, few studies have focused on the process used by superintendents in preparing school districts and educators for change.

Therefore, the purpose of this descriptive case study is to explore climate conditions within a school district that superintendents feel assist and/or hinder preparing a district for change. In addition, this study identifies and explores the use of strategies that serves to assist and/or hinder superintendents when preparing a district for change. The participants or informers of this study are superintendents currently working in Ohio to unfreeze the culture at the district level or who have previously prepared his/her staff in the school system for organizational change. At this stage in the research, organizational change readiness will be generally defined as unfreezing the culture of the organization or to simultaneously create disconfirmation, increase survival anxiety, and create psychological safety / decrease learning anxiety (Schein, 2010). At this stage in the research, change readiness strategies used in this study are identified by Armenakis et al. (1993) as persuasive communication, active participation, and management of external sources.

This study focuses on identifying and exploring critical elements of a successful change ready climate as well as identifying and describing strategies superintendents have found to support and/or hinder the change readiness process at the district level or an organization. This research can assist superintendents and other organizational leaders
in preparing his or her staff for change. The findings of this research can also assist the
work of all leaders in overcoming barriers while preparing for organizational change.

Background of Study

According to Lewin’s (1951) model of change, the process of change contains
three distinct phases: unfreezing, moving, and freezing or refreezing. The first phase of
the model, the unfreezing or change readiness phase, prepares an organization for
successful implementation of an initiative or change. Later, Schein (2010) expanded
upon Lewin’s change model (1951) as well as each phase within the model. Schein
(2010) added three distinct elements to the unfreezing phase, or the change readiness
phase, to create motivation to change. This expanded phase of the change model focused
on conditions within the climate necessary to motivate individuals during the change
readiness process. The components of the unfreezing stage of Schein’s motivating
individuals to change are disconfirmation, survival anxiety, and psychological safety /
learning anxiety. These three elements are also known as components of an effective
change message as well as elements of the five individual change beliefs.

In addition to a climate conducive to change, leaders also need strategies to
prepare their organization for change. Armenakis et al. (1993) identified three influence
strategies that leaders use to increase the level of change readiness within an
organization. These strategies include persuasive communication, management of
external information, and active participation (Armenakis et al., 1993). Scholars have
researched many aspects of change readiness; much of the research focuses on
organizational readiness at the individual level and some at the collective team level.
However, little research is available on change readiness efforts used by superintendents as well as change readiness at the organizational level. Secondly, abundant research is available on change efforts led by principals. However, research is lacking for change efforts led by superintendents. Thus, there are questions regarding superintendents and change readiness at the organizational level to be answered.

**Research Questions**

No matter which type of organization a leader plans to transform, a plethora of literature is readily available on the subject of change readiness. Despite the extensive research providing guidance on organizational change readiness, outcomes continue to result in high rates of failure (Burke, 2011). Meanwhile, change agents continue to implement change efforts and prepare people within their organizations for changes (Walinga, 2008). Therefore, this study will focus on the following questions:

1. What conditions do superintendents feel are critical to the climate of a school district during the unfreezing phase of the change process?
2. What strategies do superintendents in Ohio school districts identify as supporting the process of creating organizational change readiness?
3. How are these strategies used to create organizational change readiness?
4. What strategies do superintendents in Ohio school districts identify as hindering the process of creating organizational change readiness?
5. How are these strategies used during the process?
Theoretical Framework

Various indicators are identified as characteristics essential to an organization ready for change. Therefore, many scholars developed models of change to assist in successfully managing organizational change. This study concentrates on two particular models. One change model is the Three Phase Model of Change presented by Lewin (1947); the other change model is a Managed Culture Change Model presented by Schein (2010).

Kurt Lewin (1947) developed the Three Phase Model of Change which includes unfreezing, moving, and freezing or refreezing phases. Schein (2010) expanded Lewin’s three-phase change model by adding distinct components to each phase within the change model. The three components added to the unfreezing or readiness phase model are disconfirmation, survival anxiety, and psychological safety or learning anxiety. This initial unfreezing stage or readiness phase and the components are considered an essential precursor for successful change in any organization.

Although readiness is a precursor for successful change, elevating change from an individual to an organizational level adds an element of socialization to the process. Thus, a change message becomes a major component of the change process. Thus, a change message is a critical element to increasing the readiness level of a school district. Armenakis et al. (1993) identifies five components of an effective change message: discrepancy, self-efficacy, appropriateness, principal support, and personal valance. All five components of an effective change message also correspond to components of Schein’s Managed Culture Change Model (2010) or an element within the components.
However, in order to create change leaders need strategies. Armenakis et al. (1993) identifies three influence strategies for organizational change: persuasive communication, management of external information, and active participation. These three strategies are identified as ways organizational leaders or superintendents can influence the process of readying the district for change. All in all, external and internal environmental elements of change will continue to conflict with organizations; therefore, so must our quest for an understanding of the change process also continue.

**Definitions**

*Change:* a difficult process involving painful unlearning and learning (Lewin, 1951; Schein, 1996).

*Content Driver:* content change is defined as the attributes of the initiative being implemented (Holt, Armenakis, Field, & Harris, 2007) or the response to environmental change (Palmer, 2012).

*Disconfirmation:* information revealing a gap between the current state of an organization and its goals or processes (Schein, 2010).

*Learning Anxiety:* a feeling that new behaviors or a new attitude cannot be adopted without loss of self or culture (Schein, 2010).

*Organizational Change:* a difficult process involving painful unlearning and learning (Lewin, 1951; Schein, 1996).

*Organizational Readiness:* defined as the precursor to engaging support for a change initiative or resisting a change initiative (Armenakis, et al., 1993; Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Self, 2007).
Psychological Safety: a person’s perception of being able to safely take interpersonal risks in the workplace without fear of consequences (Edmondson, 1999; Payne, 2012).

Strategies: are “persuasive communication, active participation, and management of external sources” (Armenakis, et al., 1993, p. 687).

Survival Anxiety: identifying the need to change or the need to establish new habits forgoing all ways of thinking (Schein, 2010).

Significance of Study

This study focuses on change readiness in the educational organization. The first objective of this study is designed to identify and explore elements within a climate that affect change readiness. The second objective is to identify and explore strategies that affect change readiness. A plethora of information and guidance can be found on organizational change as well as leading or managing organizational change. However, it is estimated that approximately 70-80% of all change initiatives in organizations continue to be unsuccessful (Pellettiere, 2006). This current study serves to focus on superintendents who have current or past experience implementing initiatives and/or mandates and preparing his or her staff for change at the district level in an educational K-12 setting.

At this time researchers have not developed many tools with the ability to extract data on the strategies used by superintendents to unfreeze culture in an educational organization. This study extracts data regarding the elements in the climate needed to unfreeze the culture as well as the strategies superintendents use to prepare a district for
change. At the organizational level, readiness includes a social layer. Therefore, social dynamics may be extracted during this study as well. The results of this study will be used by superintendents, organizational change agents, struggling and/or inexperienced leaders, non-profit organizational leaders, and governmental change agents when preparing organizations for change. Ultimately, this study benefits student achievement. If teachers are better prepared to embrace change, they can focus on educating children rather than focusing on compliance issues and mandates.

Additionally, in-depth social dynamics at the organizational level change is a less researched area in comparison to the extensively studied area of individual readiness (Weiner, 2009). This current study provides research in an area lacking in previous studies, district-level change readiness; whereas, previous studies focused on individual change and team or departmental level readiness. Lastly, many past studies focus on correlations between readiness for change and individual traits or characteristics rather than readiness indicators or strategies even at the individual level. In other words, this study researches readiness preparation at the organizational level rather than at the individual level; then again, it also focuses on strategies used to prepare an organization for change readiness rather than on individual traits leading to readiness for change. Therefore, the researcher believes this study will add a dimension of research at the organizational level to the current literature within the field of change readiness in a K-12 setting.

Lastly, many of the leadership studies reviewed by this researcher focused on change at the building level primarily involving principals as the change agents. Few
studies focus on the role of the superintendent at the district level or any other level of the organization during the change process. The various studies on leadership and superintendents focused on time management, communication with the school district and the board of education, and preparing for a levy. However, research and studies appear to be lacking for the role of a superintendent in preparing his or her school district for initiatives and mandates. This study, however, will further the research on superintendents as change agents in relation to unfreezing the culture of a school district and preparing his or her organizations for change.

According to Thompson and Hunt (1996) the implementation of organizational change is a black box. We continue to lack insight into the process of change. This includes the unfreezing process. However, the legislative body continues to drive educational advancements in Ohio using laws and mandates. With a better understanding of factors contributing to change readiness, leaders and educational teams can establish a course of action to improve the success rates of initiatives and mandates in educational organizations. With the findings from this study, legislators, Board of Education members, administrators, parents, and other stakeholders can make informed financial, political, and educational decisions regarding changes in policies and programs that affect school districts and education advancements across Ohio.

**Delimitations**

According to Roberts (2004), delimitations help to define the scope of your study. Roberts (2004) also provides several examples of typical delimitations often included in studies which are time, location, sample used in the study, aspect of the problem to
research, and criteria for the study. The following are delimitations of this study. The study began in 2015 and concluded in 2016. The organizations included in this study were public school districts in Ohio; therefore, at the time of this study only current Superintendents of an Ohio public school district were included in the study. To be eligible to participate in the study, these Superintendents needed to have three (3) years of consecutive experience as a superintendent in his or her current school district. In addition, only superintendents currently implementing (or implemented within the past three (3) years) federal, state, or local mandated initiatives were included in the study.

**Assumptions**

This study assumes that participating superintendents answered all interview questions openly and honestly.

**Limitations**

The structure, climate, and culture of each educational organization may or may not vary. Additionally, each superintendent’s leadership style and ability to lead his or her organization may or may not be comparable. Each of these limitations may have an effect on the participants’ responses.

**Subjectivity**

During a qualitative research study, the researcher should acknowledge any association with the topic of focus (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The researcher in this study is a veteran educator with more than twenty years of experience in education. The researcher has implemented change in multiple educational organizations and has been a recipient of change at multiple school districts. However, the researcher understands
elements of the climate and strategies of change will be unique for each superintendent according to their own perspective of the lived experience.

As a change agent, the researcher has prepared staff for change at various levels within organizations (to include individual – teacher, group/team, building, and district level) while serving as a teacher-leader, building principal, curriculum consultant, and central office administrator. Additionally, the researcher has implemented numerous school and district improvement plans serving as an external and internal facilitator using the Ohio Improvement Process. The Ohio Improvement Process (OIP) is a systematic school improvement process used by school districts in Ohio. The OIP process utilizes strategies linked to Schein’s readiness components such as disconfirmation, survival anxiety, and psychological/learning anxiety. Another association the researcher has with this research is the experience of training building instructional coaches, facilitating and implementing teacher-based-teams, implementing literacy initiatives and programs, and implementing building-wide data-based decision-making instructional plans. Also, the researcher trained building coaches to implement initiatives and programs using readiness components and strategies included in this study. The school moved from improvement status to independent status within three-years of the implementation of the components and strategies noted in this study. Therefore, the researcher is familiar with the readiness components being studied and their application to school improvement and climate conditions.

The researcher of this study is a central office administrator who has worked and continues to work closely with superintendents. Therefore, the researcher is familiar with
the daily plights of a superintendent. This knowledge will assist and enhance the flow of
two-way communication during the interview process and enrich any needed follow-up
questions. Since trust and rapport are important while engaging in a qualitative study
(Glesne, 2011), the aforementioned familiarity with day-to-day plights of the
superintendent, overall experience as an educator and affiliation as a professional
educator from Ohio will assist in the area of building a relationship of trust and rapport
during the interview process and throughout the study. However, the researcher attempts
to maintain neutrality and objectivity with all data collected and analyzed. Maintaining
rationale of ambiguity is a necessity in order to logically make data connections.

**Organization of Study**

The significance for this research serves as a vehicle to extract information in
reference to the strategies superintendents use when preparing an organization for
change. The results of this study can be used by other superintendents and change agents
as well as less experienced or struggling leaders in the educational setting who are
preparing organizations for change. Additionally, leaders of non-profit and governmental
organizational as well as policy makers at various levels of the government can benefit
from the findings of this study.

The remainder of this research is divided into four distinct chapters to equal a
total of five chapters with a bibliography and appendixes in the following manner.

Chapter two (2) presents a review of the related literature regarding Forces of
Change, Organizational Survival and Organizational Demise, Organizational Change,
Change Readiness, Leadership, and Influence Change Strategies. Chapter three (3)
provides research questions guiding the study, the design of the study, an overview of the informers, the role of the researcher, method for data collection, and the method for data analysis. Discussions of the reliability and validity as well as the ethical considerations are also discussed. Ethical considerations included in chapter three (3) are risks, benefits, and protections of the informants’ confidentiality as participants. Chapter four (4) includes a presentation of the data collected, review of data organization and analysis as well as reporting of collected data. Chapter five (5) includes a summary of the findings, implications for practice and recommendations for future research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The literature review for this study consists of eight major topics: forces of change, organizational survival, organizational demise, organizational change, organizational change readiness, leadership, change message, and strategies. The first section of the literature review focuses on forces of change. Within this section, environment forces, organic forces, and political forces are reviewed. The next section, organization survival, includes the Theory of Business. The topic of organizational demise is discussed next which includes the Theory of Inertia, organization and environmental interaction, implementation gap and entropy. Lastly, a review of several models of change as well as resistance to change is presented.

This first section of the literature review prefaces the importance of change readiness by focusing on the interaction between an organization and its environment. This first part of the literature review examines reactive changes in relation to change readiness and organizational survival. In addition, change models are provided to allow for various research perspectives and interpretations of the change process. The change models are included as reference points for comparing change models used as part of the framework for this study.

Next, the literature review focuses on organizational change readiness. This section defines change readiness and provides a scholarly review of organizational change readiness research and theory. Although a thorough overview of research is presented, the focus is placed on Lewin’s Three-Stage Model of Change and Schein’s
Motivation to Change Model (2010). The emphasis is placed on the first phase of the change models, the unfreezing or readiness phase.

Schein’s (2010) elaboration of Lewin’s first phase, the unfreezing phase, included three distinct elements: disconfirmation, survival anxiety, and psychological safety/learning anxiety. The distinct elements of disconfirmation, survival anxiety and learning anxiety/psychological safety are important when creating a change readiness climate in the organization (Schein, 2010). The presence of a readiness climate helps to facilitate the change process (Schein, 2010); thus, assisting with reform and the implementation of mandates and initiatives.

The remaining sections of the literature review include a review of leadership, change messages, and influence strategies for change readiness. In these sections leadership and change messages are defined and components of the message are identified. Additionally, each of the five components is expanded upon and relevant literature is provided. Lastly, the three influence change strategies are presented. Each of these strategies is also expanded upon and relevant literature is presented.

This section first takes a glimpse at leadership. The literature review of leadership literature for this study is a broad overview of applicable research. Since this study is not focused on the superintendent’s type of leadership or characteristics of a good change agent, a shallow approach is taken to reviewing literature on leadership. Rather, this study focuses on creating the elements of a readiness climate as well as using strategies that assist or hinder the process of change readiness. Therefore, the literature review for the area of leadership does not include a multitude of details. Rather the
focus of the study is around change readiness. However, in order to understand change and change readiness, we must begin by examining the forces of change.

**Forces of Change**

**Environmental forces.** Elements of change are all around us. Elements of change or environmental forces can exist externally or within an organization. Environmental forces can cause change to an individual’s comfort level or to the climate of an organization. These forces could also cause a misalignment between individuals (i.e., staff, constituents) goals and organizational goals. Examples of external environmental forces existing outside an organization are adaptation and choice. Examples of these forces include competition, scarcity of resources, and technological advancements (Kanter, Stein, & Jick, 1992). Additionally, a number of scholars recognized globalization as an environmental force (e.g., Alas, 2009; Anderson, 2008; Armenakis & Frendenberger, 1997; Chanda, 2002; Eby, Adams, Russell, & Gaby, 2000; Goh, Cousins, & Elliot, 2006; Griffith, 2010; Holt & Vardaman, 2013; Madsen, Miller, & John, 2005; Pelletiere, 2006; Rafferty, Jimmieson, and Armenakis, 2013; Turta, 2011; Santhidran, Chandran, & Borromeo, 2013; Weeks, Roberts, Chonko, & Jones, 2004; Wilson, 2012). Educational examples of forces effecting school districts are the environmental elements of competition in Ohio schools such as school vouchers, school choice, community schools and charter schools. Scarcity of resources is another common environmental force for stakeholders within educational communities; this force of change is often caused by unstable funding at the state and federal level, lack of equitable funding for education at the state level, failure of a local tax levy or decreased student
enrollment within the school district. Educators in Ohio might categorize a variety of recent state mandates as environmental forces.

Of course, the forces from technological advancements are of great focus in light of the recent legislative mandates regarding assessments. Technological advancements have brought forward assessment contracts with organizations such as the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), already obsolete in Ohio, and American Institutes for Research (AIR) in order to enhance online student testing of growth and achievement. Today, a teacher can receive immediate results of a formative assessment that his or her student completed using an iPhone. Lastly, globalization is also an external force of change. Global changes exists as we move through mandates and initiatives such as the common core standards, the 21st century learning skills as well as college and career readiness goals which state that all students should be prepared for college or work force upon graduation. These and other forces call upon organizations to make changes to standard operating procedures. Some of these movements toward reform in education are mandated changes by local, state, or federal regulations.

**Context driver.** Factors outside the organization such as policies and procedures at the state and federal level as well as globalization of technology and communication, which increase competition amongst businesses, are considered context drivers. These types of context drivers can contribute to shaping the economy. Factors within the organization such as past experiences with change, job specialization and level of motivation to reach organizational goals are also considered context drivers (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). These too are considered context drivers and can contribute to change
(Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). Palmer (2012) further expands on context drivers by identifying specific forces that shape the market as competition, wider environment, supplies and customers, sector structure, and technology as contributing external forces contributing to change. Additionally, other internal contextual factors include the organizational structure as well as culture and resources (Palmer, 2012). Federal mandates, specialization of licensure, the requirement for continuous educational units or credits to renew licensure, College Credit Plus for students, and College and Career readiness for students are examples of context drivers. Whether districts are ready to react to these changes or not, these changes are here and cannot be ignored.

**Organic forces.** Another category of forces is organic or life cycle forces. Organic forces bring changes to the organization’s infrastructure as the entity increases in age or size (Kanter et al., 1992). This category of forces includes mergers, changes in leadership, alteration of an organizational structure, and employee shortage. Organic forces such as change in leadership or structure could alter an organization’s infrastructure. A number of scholars of change note this force of change in their studies and reviews (Chilton, 2010; Clark, Cavanaugh, Brown & Sambamurthy, 1997; Madsen et al., 2005). Examples of organic change in Ohio’s educational system include: changes in State Teacher Retirement System (STRS) causing educator shortages, merging of schools and districts, desegregation of schools, consolidation of districts or use of shared resources increasing or decreasing the size or structure of the organization, and an increase in turnover rates of leadership at the building level and central office creating a possible shift in the vision and structure of the organization.
**Political forces.** Although political forces are a facet of environmental forces, politics is prominent in the current educational environment today. Therefore, this force needs mentioned separately. Political forces are referred to as “jockeying for a position that goes on as groups of individuals advance their own interests and make their claim on the organization’s resources (Kanter et al., 1992, p.46)””. The political forces of change category includes politics, state and federal change in regulations and mandates, and demand for accountability and efficiency. Political force is a recognizable force of change cited in a number of studies and reviews (Burnes, 1997; Cervone, 2013; Daly, 2009; Hallgrimson, 2008; Howley, 2012; Pelletiere, 2006; Scalia, 2011; Weeks et al., 2004; Zimmerman, 2006). Recently educators in Ohio faced several mandates and accountability requirements that were politically driven to include the mandated Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) which has changed a number of times since its adoption; the Ohio Principal Evaluation System (OPES) which is also continuously changing; Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) which have become an arbitrary piece of the evaluation system as well as controversial; Common Core Standards (CCS) which for use in Ohio are now being revised; Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) assessments which are no longer the vendor for assessments in Ohio; American Institutes for Research (AIR) assessments recently included the opt-out feature if parents wish for their child not to participate in assessments (this opt-out option is no longer available); End of Course Exams which have changed where various tests are added or taken away and most recently students can qualify to take a different assessment (AP, CCP); New Graduation Requirements – which have changed a number of times and
are currently under review again due to a prediction that a high percentage of students will not graduate under the new requirements due to lack of needed points earned from assessments; College and Career Readiness – readiness for college or workforce upon graduation which is a rating appealed by several schools this year because inaccurate data appeared on the report card; Third Grade Reading Guarantee where schools are scrambling to teach third grade students retained by this mandate fourth grade material; New District Report Cards which annually change what is measured as well as expectations for subgroup passage (annual measurable objectives – AMOs) due to the Ohio ESEA flexibility waiver. In addition, the Educational Student Educational Act (ESEA) has now changed to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) which brings changes full circle to many of the aforementioned mandates. Change begins and ends with the environment (Burke, 2008). With all the initiatives and mandates being implemented in Ohio, change is unavoidable. In other words, educational organizations within the state are currently inundated with top-down legislative mandates. An organization must react to these changes.

Organizational Survival

Theory of business. External forces such as politics, regulations, and mandates push against internal units within the organization. Educational entities struggle to find an appropriate content change to react to the environmental force. However, an appropriate change is necessary to create an environmental-organizational fit. In other words, with all the research and information available to identify and explain content change, the content change to form the environmental-organization fit continues to be ambiguous and
difficult to identify. Schools are often left to figure out the appropriate change on their own, which often results in confusion. Drucker (1994), however, gives guidance regarding what content to change. Statements or “Assumptions about the environment define what an organization is paid for” (Drucker, 1994, p.100). He believes the what to change when the organization no longer fits the environment is found within the organization’s Theory of Business.

The goals of the organization normally focus on three major areas: the external environment, the purpose, and the core of the organization (Burke, 2008; Drucker, 1994). According to Drucker’s Theory of Business (1994), an organization must maintain four criteria to remain in balance with its environment. Drucker believes assumptions must fit reality, assumptions must fit one another, the assumptions must be known and understood by all, and the business theory must be tested consistently (Burke, 2008; Drucker, 1994). In other words, it is important for an organization to focus efforts on the correct content or what of change.

Organizational Demise

Ohio seems to consistently be striving to improve the quality of education of all students in order to better prepare our students to take their place amongst the population in the regional, national, and global workforce. Ohio invests a substantial amount of time and effort into initiatives and mandates expecting to bring about change throughout our education system statewide.

However, experience reveals change is difficult and mostly unwelcomed. Furthermore, effective organizational change is rare (Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Burnes,
2001; By, 2005; Gilmore, Shea, & Useem, 1997; Meaney & Pung, 2008). So, the question becomes: Why is it difficult, many times impossible, for organizations to implement or maintain change?

Not only is change difficult, most organizational change remains evolutionary rather than revolutionary (Burke, 2008). Unfortunately, this means most successful changes in school districts are not systematic, systemic or sustainable; instead change is evolutionary which could mean on a small scale, short-term change, or effective in only parts of the organization. Revolutionary change or large scale change involves a change in the strategy, leadership or culture of an organization and is rarely accomplished (Burke, 2008). A revolutionary change or change in strategy, leadership or culture permeates to the core of the organization causing permanent change in the behavior of its members (McDainel, 2007). A change of this magnitude takes an extensive amount of time and involves systematic and systemic change throughout the whole organization. Success of a major change such as a revolutionary change depends on what is changed (Yukl, 2010). For example, for an organizational change to be successful one might attempt to change either roles or attitudes of employees, but not both (Beer, Eisenstat & Spector, 1990).

**The theory of inertia.** The educational institution is a well-established organization. With that said, the Theory of Inertia indicates strategic orientation or an organization’s ability of core changes decreases with age (Hannan & Freeman, 1984). In other words, the educational organization is an aged institution that is well-established; therefore, according to the Theory of Inertia an assumption could be made that change in
schools should occur at a slow rate. This assumption is supported by Kelly and Amburgey (1991) during their study of the air carrier industry. However, results of studying several day care centers (Baum, 1990) do not support this assumption. Thus, these studies present conflicting results.

Kelly and Amburgey (1991) attempted to replicate the assumptions of organizational inertia using the air carrier industry. Strong pressure for organizational reliably and accountably made the air carrier industry an ideal organization for the study. At the time of the study, the industry was experiencing regulatory changes (Kelly & Amburgey, 1991). Baum (1990), on the other hand, studied 756 day care centers in Toronto. Baum’s study (1990) attempted to address change in response to environmental change and the life cycle of an organization; whereas, Kelly and Amburgey’s (1991) study addressed organizational failure in response to change. Results of the two studies supported some of the assumptions of inertia.

Kelly and Amburgey (1991) as well as Baum (1990) built studies on Hannan and Freeman’s research around the Theory of Structural Inertia. Hannan and Freeman’s (1984) study indicates structural inertia can be high in one contextual area but low in another contextual area within an organization. The Theory of Structural Inertia is based upon the expectation that formal organizations are reliable and accountable for their actions (Hannan & Freeman, 1984). Therefore, changes in core areas within an organization, such as goals, authority, and core technology, have a high probability of failure (Hannan & Freeman, 1984). In addition to these findings, Hannan and Freeman (1984) indicate failure of core changes increase as an organization matures in age and
increase in size. In other words, any large-scale changes in school districts are unlikely to happen as districts increase in size and age. If a change does occur, it happens in pockets or silos of one context or another throughout the organization.

Both studies test the assumption that strategic change, or core changes, increase when there is a change in the environment. According to results from the studies, this assumption is not supported by the study in the air carrier industry (Kelly & Amburgey, 1991). However, the assumption that change in the environment is positively correlated to an increase in strategic change within the organization is supported by the study within day care centers (Baum, 1990).

**Summary**

Burke (2008) reminds us that forces in the external environment of organizations occur sporadically. Because of this, it is necessary for an organization to react promptly to environmental forces (Stadtlander, 2006; Susanto, 2008). School District too should respond swiftly to forces of change. Because external forces impact organizations, Susanto (2008) emphasizes the need to implement changes within the organization in areas such as strategies, processes, structures, and culture. School Districts are organizations; therefore, districts have strategies, processes, structures, and culture. Changes can also be woven into the threads of the system using these components. Burke (2008) reminds us that changes are constant in organizations. In a constantly changing environment, successful change and innovation is necessary for an organization’s survival (Holt & Vardaman, 2013) schools included. However, for change to be successful in these organizations, a high level of readiness for change is necessary.
According to studies focusing on organizational change (Armitage, Sheeran, Conner, & Arden 2004; Thompson & Hunt, 2006; Walinga, 2008), a gap remains between the stage of preparing for change, change readiness, and implementing change within an organization. This implementation gap between the readiness phase and the change process has been referred to as the black box of change (Thompson & Hunt, 1996). In other words, little insight into the implementation process of change has been gained from research studies thus far. Furthermore, the question of how to measure successful change or failure of change in an organization still remains ambiguous today.

**Organizational Change**

How to measure change is not the only difficulty for organizations. To further complicate the process of organizational change, according to Katz and Kahn (1978), organizations are open systems that gravitate towards entropy. In other words, an organization naturally moves toward chaos or its own demise. Katz and Kahn (1978) also theorize that surviving organizations move towards a steady-state of dynamic homeostasis. Meaning, organizations naturally desire a state of balance or to maintain the status-quo.

However, according to Burke (2008), change fails to occur because change leaders underestimate the impact of the external environment and internal transformational components (i.e. mission, strategy, leadership, and culture). Whereas, Drucker (1994) believes *the theory of business* is the reason for successful organizational change, others, believe change readiness is the crucial element that causes change to be successful in an organization (Armenakis & Frendenberger, 1997; By, 2007; Chilenski,

Define change. Change is defined by scholars in many different ways. Change is considered by some as the transformation of an organization between the current state and a future state (Barnett & Carroll, 1995; Beckhard, & Harris, 1987). Change is also referred to as moving to a new and different state (Smith, 2005), or a natural part of life (Anderson, 2008), a response to a disturbance (Armenakis & Freidenberger, 1997), a difficult process involving painful unlearning and learning (Lewin, 1951; Schein, 1996), or a natural process which evolves as organizations grow and age (Schein, 2010). Burke, Lake, and Paine (2009) define change as “an empirical observation of difference in form, quality, or state over time in an organizational entity” (p.861). For the purpose of this study, we will define organizational change as a difficult process involving painful unlearning and learning.

Change is unavoidable (Armenakis et al., 1993; Burnes, 1997; By, 2007; Kanter, 2008; Kotter, 1996; Luecke, 2003). In other words, stakeholders in an educational community are likely to experience change at some point during their school-stakeholder relationship. Organizations need to change in order to survive (Al-Abrow & Abrishamker, 2012; Beer et al., 1990; Burke, 2008; Edelman & Benning, 1999; Fox-Wolfgang, Boal, & Hunt, 1998; Newman, 1999; Rafferty & Simons, 2006); therefore, school districts need to change in order to survive. Organizations are most likely to
undergo change due to three forces: the relationship between an organization and its environment, growth through the life cycle, or political conflicts and economic interests (Kanter et al., 1992). These are the aforementioned environmental, organic, and political forces of change that can affect change in an organization. Since educational institutions are organizations, change forces can also bring about change within a school district.

**Models of change.** Change is constant and all around us. Although the cause of change and necessity of organizational change are challenging topics, the real challenge is the process of change. According to Palmer, (2012) the change process includes beginning and end points of change, change managers, models of change, and formulation and implementation of change. Approximately 80% of change research is focused on formulation or implementation of organizational change topics (Palmer, 2012). In other words, actions taken to initiate and implement change are considered important by many researchers in the area of change management. The *how* of organizational change can be studied by viewing various models of change and components within those models. Although there are several change models, four models are reviewed in this section.

**Lewin.** According to Lewin (1947), change can be viewed as a three-step model which includes “unfreezing, moving, and freezing” (p.35). Unfreezing is referred to as “breaking open the shell of complacency and self-righteousness” (Lewin, 1947, p.35). Some refer to this state as a state of readiness or a state of strategic learning in an organization (Redding & Catalanello, 1994). Redding & Catalanello (1994) believe organizations should become permanently unfrozen in order to prepare for change in
general rather than a specific change. The second stage in Lewin’s model, moving, transpires because people are eager to belong (Lewin, 1947). Lastly, Lewin (1947) believes freezing occurs because individuals like to “stick to their decisions” (p.37). A frozen state for an organization is referred to as “the way we do things around here” (Redding & Catalanello, p. 48). Since Lewin’s model is considered circular, the frozen state of an organization could fall after the moving phase or immediately before the unfreezing phase.

Lewin (1947) coined the term of unfreezing, moving, and freezing or refreezing as the process of change. However, other contributors to the process of change are mentioned such as Armenakis, Harris, Field, Judson, Kotter, and Galpin, as well as Lewin (as cited in Armenakis and Bedeian, 1999). The models of change presented within this chapter by Judson (1991), Kotter (1995), and Galpin 1996) are all change models based on Lewin’s (1947) three phases of change which are unfreezing, moving, and freezing (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). For a better understanding of the aforementioned models, each model is described in detail.

**Judson.** Change is important within an organization; therefore, change is important in a school district. The change process can also play a colossal role in a successful or failed change effort or mandate. According to Judson (1991), a systematic approach to making change is a five-step model rather and a three-step model. He refers to the phases of systematic change as (1) analyzing and planning the change, (2) communicating about change, (3) gaining acceptance of the required changes in behavior,
(4) making the initial transition, and (5) consolidation and follow-up (Judson, 1991). The first three stages are considered preparatory phases for change (Judson, 1991, p.167).

**Kotter.** Through a different perspective, Kotter develops a different change model. Kotter (1995) identifies in his model of change eight (8) specific steps change agents should implement during the change process. These stages are (1) establish a sense of urgency; (2) form a powerful coalition; (3) create a vision; (4) communicate the vision; (5) empower employees; (6) generate short-term wins; (7) consolidate change and produce more change; (8) anchoring new approaches in the culture.

**Galpin.** Next, Galpin (1996) presents a wheel model of change with wedges representing distinct stages within the change process. Galpin (1996, p. 4) divides his wheel into 5 distinct parts; each representing a period of time within the change process. According to the model shown in Galpin’s (1996) *The Human Side of Change*, steps 1-8 of the change can take up to 20 months, not to include the last step which is ongoing. The nine (9) steps are to establish the need to change, develop and disseminate the vision of the change, diagnose and analyze the current situation, generate recommendations, detail recommendations, pilot test recommendations, prepare recommendations, as well as roll out changes, and measure and refine changes (Galpin, 1996, p.4). These models are a few of the change processes used to implement organizational change.

**Resistance to change.** In spite of extensive guidance on initiating change, organizational studies indicate that many change efforts fail to meet expectations (Burke, 2011; Yukl, 2010). Studies of private and public organizations reveal that 70% of change programs fail to be implemented at all (Amis & Aissoui, 2013; Beer & Nohria, 2000;
Craine, 2007; Ford & Ford, 2009; Kotter, 1996). One reason for a high rate of failed change efforts might be an attempt to fit change initiative into the current organizational goals (Gambrell & Stevens, 1992). School districts are overwhelmed with initiatives and programs. Many times these initiatives and programs are mandates with implementation timelines from outside agencies. Although the mandates and timelines may not fit the organizational goals, change is expected to happen in a timely manner and successfully. As mentioned before, approximately 70-80% of organizational change initiatives fail (Pellettiere, 2006). With failing initiatives and relaxing or disappearing mandates this too shall pass resonates through the halls of schools across Ohio. It must also be noted that timely implementation is an ambiguous term and quite a quandary. Implementation of change cannot be rushed for revolutionary change to be successful; an extensive amount of time is required. Furthermore, an attempt to move directly to the changing phase without first unfreezing the culture of the organization could result in resistance (Yukl, 2010).

There are a number of reasons why people resist change (Yukl, 2010). Resistance is a common reaction to change. Yukl (2010 believes there are nine (9) major reasons why people resist change: “lack of trust, belief that change is not necessary, belief that change is not feasible, economic threats, relative high cost, fear of personal failure, loss of status and power, threat to values and ideals, and resentment of interference” (p. 299-300). Resistance can be viewed as a hindrance in moving forward with change. However, resistance can also be viewed in a positive manner as energy to be redirected towards improving change (Ford et al., 2008; Jick, 1993; Yuk, 2010).
More importantly, we need to understand why resistance to change continues. “Understanding resistance to change is to recognize that some behavior that has become dysfunctional for us may, nonetheless, be difficult to give up and replace because it serves other positive functions – secondary gain—this is why we sometimes continue to live with our neurotic behavior” (Schein, 2010, p. 301). In other words, we continue to do the same thing over and over again because we are determined to remain in our comfort zone. We continue to accept or blame others for receiving the same results again and again because we are fearful of the unknown.

Change Readiness

Doing the same thing and getting the same results should not and cannot be an option when educating students. Change is needed in our schools. Although, there are differing ideas on which components contribute to change and change readiness, many researchers can agree that change readiness is a crucial element for organizational change to be successful (Armenakis & Frendenberger, 1997; By, 2007; Chilenski et al., 2007; Chilton, 2010; Choi, 2011; Clark et al., 1997; Cunningham et al., 2002; Desplaces, 2005; Kwahk & Lee, 2008; Levesque et al., 2006). Meaning, organizations fail to change because they are not prepared to change.

**Definition of change readiness.** Since change readiness is considered a vital component of successful organizational change, the term needs defined. Readiness is defined as a comprehensive attitude influenced by context (Chilenski, et al. 2007), content, process, individual behavior (Anderson, 2008), collective behavior (Bouckenoooghe, 2008; Helfrich et al., 2011), or an attitude towards a specific change
(Armenakis et al., 1993; Holt, et al., 2007). Another definition of change readiness is a planned change that is anchored in communication, innovations, and knowledge transfer (Flaspohler, Anderson-Butcher, Bean, Burk, & Paternite, 2008). A definition for change readiness in an educational setting is the readiness level of a school environment and its ability to respond to change while integrating school history, culture, and continuous improvement into the fabric of the organization (Inserra & Cheeseman, 2005). Lastly, readiness is also defined as the precursor to engaging support for a change initiative or resisting a change initiative (Armenakis, et al., 1993; Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Self, 2007). To bring it all together, Content + Context+ Process+ Individual Attributes = Beliefs (Readiness) = Behaviors (Holt et al., 2007). Regardless of the definition or formula used to explain the state of readiness, organizational readiness for change is something that needs to be developed, nurtured, and sustained (Fixen, Blasé, Homer, & Skugai, 2009) in a school district.

Readiness for change contains three drivers of change: content, context, and process (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Palmer, 2012). Holt and Vardaman (2007), however, refer to a fourth diver of change, individual attributes. Exploration of the four drivers of change readiness is important for a comprehensive understanding of organizational change as well as important to enhance the level of change readiness for a school district. Holt and Vardaman (2007) define the four content drivers as attributes of the initiative being implemented, attributes of the environments, and steps taken to implement the initiative. Hoft and Vardaman (2007) define the additional component, individual attributes, as the attitudes of employees where initiatives are implemented.
**Five individual change beliefs.** Armenakis et al. (2007) identify five (5) change beliefs that motivate individuals to support change when incorporated into a change message. These five beliefs are discrepancy, self-efficacy, personal valence, principal support, and appropriateness (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Armenakis, et al., 2007). These five (5) individual change beliefs are also found within Schein’s motivation to change model (2010) as well as the components of a change message. Research conducted by Armenakis and Harris (2009) states the five (5) individual change beliefs, also the five (5) sentiments (Armenakis et al., 2007), are important to the change process phases which include diagnosis, change adoption, institutionalization, and creating readiness. Therefore, these beliefs are important elements in preparing a school district for change.

**Components of change readiness.** Just as scholars define change readiness in a variety of ways, scholars also identify varying characteristics of organizational change readiness. Most researchers can agree on five (5) five key components or characteristics of organizational readiness which include confidence in the change agent, belief that change is necessary, an established sense of urgency, active participation, and quality communication (Armenakis & Frendenberger, 1997; Caldwell, Roby-Williams, Rush & Ricke-Kiely, 2009; Goh et al., 2006; Kwahk & Lee, 2008; Madsen et al., 2005; Soumyaja et al., 2011; Walinga, 2008). Components of change readiness are shown to enhance the success of organizational change. Therefore, implementing a change plan without the components could result in failed change. However, just as there is an assortment of
definitions for change readiness, there are varying opinions on the necessary components needed to create change readiness in an organization.

**Schein’s creating motivation to change.** Preparing an organization for change readiness is often referred to as unfreezing a culture in an organization. Schein (2010) believes Lewin’s unfreezing phase of the change process creates a “disequilibrium (p.301)” within the organization or begins a process of “creating a motivation to change (p.301)” within an individual. Other scholars in the field might refer to the unfreezing stage as challenging the status quo (French & Bell, 1984). Yukl (2010) reminds us of Lewin’s (1951) original intent for the unfreezing phase, realizing the old way no longer works. In other words, we must change something to get different results. In Schein’s Motivation to Change Model (2010), Lewin’s original change model is expanded upon. The readiness phase or unfreezing phase of Schein’s change model is divided into three distinct components forming the elements of disconfirmation, survival anxiety, and psychological safety or learning anxiety (Schein, 2010).

**Disconfirmation.** Schein (2010) defines disconfirmation as information obtained revealing a gap between the current state of an organization and its goals or processes. In other words, we are not functioning at the level needed to successfully meet organizational goals. Disconfirmation, or creating a belief that change is necessary, is noted by several academies (Armenakis & Freundenberger, 1997; Caldwell et al., 2009; Goh et al., 2006; Kwahk & Lee, 2008; Madsen et al., 2005; Soumyaja et al., 2011; Walinga, 2008) as a key component of readiness. Although readiness or unfreezing is not thought of as a linear progression, Schein (2010) believes it is pertinent to establish
disconfirmation or reveal any gaps as the beginning step of the unfreezing process.

However, Burke (2008) believes leaders should conduct self-examinations as the first step in what is the prelaunch phase. Self-examination is the process of reflecting on self and on one’s motives and values (Burke, 2008).

If the belief that change is necessary has not previously been established, information revealed from self-examination and organizational data may be insightful to a leader and helpful in determining and accepting the current reality of the organization as well as any identified gaps between the current state and the desired state of the organization. Nonetheless, if an organization’s performance has been previously embellished, establishing disequilibrium or disconfirmation might be a difficult task (Yukl, 2010). There are many reasons why past performance for an organization might be inflated. For instance, disconfirming data may exist for the organization; but, it is ignored. Having data and not acknowledging it exists can be compared to knowing you are in a bad relationship and staying (Senge, 2006). Data can be pushed aside or avoided within the organization for valid reasons as well as invalid reasons.

Nonetheless, this readiness phase is about gathering the data and establishing the gap between the present state of an organization and the organizational vision or the future state an organization wishes to attain. Burke (2008) recommends scanning the external environment of the organization for as much data as possible during this phase. In an educational environment, internal data related to teaching and learning as well as technology and policies. These types of data would be gathered and analyzed to establish disconfirmation or any gaps within the organization. Internal data regarding instructional
practices as well as Student and Staff Handbook policies and Board of Education policies and procedures could validate findings of disconfirmation and/or gaps in a school district.

Validation of the data is important. Many meeting rooms are filled with statements such as “We’re on course relative to our plan.” However, after examination of data, current reality proves otherwise. “In moving toward a desired destination, it is vital to know where you are now” (Senge, 2006, p.203). If disconfirming data can be validated, denial and defensiveness during data analysis may decrease. Thus, the individuals within the organization will find it essential to change and realize giving up old habits and old patterns of thinking are necessary to begin developing new ideas and habits (Schein, 2010). This in turn changes culture in an organization.

In Nixon’s (2014) qualitative phenomenological study examining individual’s perception to change, “having a need to know why a change is occurring” (p. 502) was a reoccurring statement in focus group sessions. However, this is not a new concept regarding change and change readiness. Use of discrepancy or appropriateness was sighted as one of the components of change messages; which is a communication tool considered necessary for change readiness. Armenakis and Harris (2009) describe using a change message to communicate in an organizational coaching experience for change readiness purposes.

In an earlier study conducted by Barrett, Haslam, Lee, and Ellis (2005), researchers believed organizations might benefit from a stage-specific approach to organizational change. These researchers were examining improvement of health and safety within the workplace of a manufacturing company. This particular study revealed
an increase in the safety intervention when the need for change was understood by the
workers in the earlier pre-contemplative (or unfreezing) stage of the change process.

Note, however, disconfirming information can make individuals within the organization
anxious and at times uncomfortable; Schein (2010) calls this uncomfortable state survival
anxiety.

**Survival anxiety.** Survival anxiety is the second component of the unfreezing
survival anxiety as identifying the need to change or the need to establish new habits
forgoing all previous ways of thinking. However, moving an individual or organization
from realizing a gap or disconfirmation to feeling a sense of urgency without creating
massive resistance can be difficult for change agents. According to Schein (2010), the
answer to moving an entity towards a readiness state of change is by increasing the
amount of survival anxiety for the individual and/or organization.

A quantitative multiple-case study by Guha, Grover, Kettinger, and Teng (1997)
explored a business change framework. The study analyzed three BPC firms by
collecting data using archived records, telephone interviews, and a questionnaire. The
results of the study identified a need to develop a sense of urgency as a precursor for
change readiness.

Another study, focused on the area of change readiness, relative to the
introduction of new technology is conducted by Kwahk and Lee (2008). During this
study, an ERP system model is tested in Korea using a convenience sample. Using the
results from the quantitative study, it is determined that creating a sense of urgency increases the change readiness level of an organization.

Kotter (1996) also speaks of establishing a sense of urgency as well as creating a guiding coalition as part of the initial stages of the Eight (8) Stage Process of Creating Change Model. Kotter believes allowing too much complacency is a common error made by many organizational leaders (1996; 1999). Burke (2008), in his studies, confirms the need for creating urgency when preparing an organization for change. The organizational leader or CEO can create urgency using convincing communication. In fact, creating a sense of urgency remains the responsibility of an inspirational leader – to inspire followers to make sacrifices for the good of the cause (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). All in all, the leader is responsible for increasing the survival anxiety throughout the organization.

During his study of organizational readiness for change, Susanto (2008) examined perceptions of employees toward change efforts. Susanto’s change readiness study collected responses from 153 employees working in an Indonesian manufacturing company (2008). This study revealed change readiness is increased when survival anxiety is lowered; thus, resulting in successful organizational change. In other words, a leader should, through focusing on the vision of the organization, show how a change will benefit the needs of all involved. However, Yukl (2010) believes posing an obvious threat to individuals within the organization can also result in change readiness. However, McLaughlin (1990) considers a bit of pressure and a bit of support is the best solution for organizational change readiness. Nonetheless, in most organizations few people volunteer
for change and even a smaller amount commit to change (Senge, 2006). A more appropriate word in change situations might be compliance rather than commitment.

Kotter (1996), Burke (2008), and Susanto (2008) agree inspirational concepts can be used to move an organization or group of individuals towards a state of readiness for change. Festinger, (1957) argues behavior is changed though continuous coercion of individuals or groups of people. Schein (2010), however, states studies conducted in communist countries do not reveal clear evidence that use of prolonged coercion results in successful change in behaviors for extended periods of time.

However, Schein (2010) believes the key to moving an organization or group towards a state of change readiness is by increasing survival anxiety or guilt. This fear or guilt could be based on any of the following: loss of power; becoming incompetent or unsuccessful at one’s job; punishment for failure at one’s job; loss of self-image; or loss of culture (Schein, 2010). In response to this fear or guilt, Schein (2010) believes stages of resistance such as denial, scapegoating, and bargaining may be experienced. As we can see survival anxiety by itself doesn’t necessarily create motivation or readiness for change (Schein, 2010).

Resistance, denial, and continuing business as usual can result in little or no change throughout the district. “Real commitment is still rare in today’s organizations. It is the experience that, 90% of the time, what passes for commitment is compliance” (Senge, 2006, p. 202). Therefore, understanding how to create commitment and avoid compliance during change is important for successful implementation of initiatives.
However, in addition to commitment to change or a sense of urgency, creating a safe environment is also important for successful change efforts.

**Psychological safety or learning anxiety.** As revealed previously, disconfirming data can be identified and shared throughout an organization. However, data may not be acknowledged or accepted for various reasons. Lack of psychological safety can lead to denial of disconfirming data at the individual, group, and organizational level (Schein, 2010). Psychological Safety is defined as a person’s perception of being able to safely take interpersonal risks in the workplace without fear of consequences (Edmondson, 1999; Payne, 2012). During the unfreezing phase, psychological safety should be increased in order to decrease learning anxiety.

Learning anxiety is the last item of Schein’s Creating Motivation to Change (2010) unfreezing phase or readiness phase to discuss. Learning anxiety is a feeling that new behaviors or new attitudes cannot be adopted without loss of self or culture (Schein, 2010). Learning anxiety is grounded on three elements of fear. Schein (2010) lists these elements of fear as loss of authority or control, personal identity, or group belonging. These fears can lead to resistance (Schein, 2010).

In order to decrease learning anxiety, a leader should create psychological safety. According to Schein (2010), to decrease learning anxiety leaders must simultaneously implement eight (8) activities; thus, creating a culture able to reduce learning anxiety. The eight (8) activities needed to creating a climate of psychological safety are developing a vision, providing formal training, involving the individual in their training, providing for informal training in teams, providing the support (resources, time, and
feedback), having positive role model, providing support groups, and providing systems and supports aligned with visions and goals.

In a 2003 study was conducted by Baer and Frese, at the organizational level on the constructs of climate for psychological safety and initiatives at the organizational level. During the study, forty-seven mid-sized German companies were examined. The study revealed a psychological climate positively correlates to company performance as well as facilitates innovation. Nonetheless, leaders have a responsibility of creating a climate of psychological safety.

**Leadership**

**Define leadership.** Researchers and popular authors have defined leadership in various ways for several years. As a matter of fact, sixty various systems have been used to classify leadership (Northouse, 2004). Laub (2010-11) defines leadership as exercising control over others. Burns (1978), however, defines leadership as a process where both parties realize goals for purposes of mobilization. No matter the definition of a leader, Superintendents are looked upon by educational constituents as the CEO of the school district. Superintendents are expected to be the movers and shakers that transport the school district into a 21st century global learning community, an innovative organizational institution used to educate and prepare students to compete for jobs that exist in a global economy.

Although several scholars in the area of change agree leadership is critical to the success of any change initiative (Bommer, Rich, & Rubin, 2005; Furst & Cable, 2008; Kotter, 1996; Tyler & Cremer, 2005); the definition for leadership is not as easily agreed
upon. Chemers (1997), Hoy and Miskel (2008), as well as Katz and Kahn (1978) all agree leadership is a social process. However, beyond that agreement definitions vary for leadership. Chemers (1997) feels a leader enlists the aid of others; while Hoy and Miskel (2008) feels leadership occurs naturally. Yukl, defines leadership by describing what it is not; leadership is not management (2010).

Katz and Kahn (1978) define leadership as a social process; then, further clarifies the process “with three main meanings: as the attribute of a position, as the characteristic of a person, and as a category of behavior” (p.527). The definitions of leadership listed only scratch the surface. Hoy and Miskel (2008) say it best “definitions of the concept are almost as numerous as the scholars engaged in its study” (p.418). Nonetheless, the individual with the most influence is usually expected to take on the role of the leader (Hoy & Miskel, 2008).

Leadership is a social process as is the act of learning as well as change readiness. Therefore, when readiness is elevated past the individual level a social-information processing model is needed (Griffin, 1987). For this reason, many leaders use a change message to prepare their organizations for large scale changes. The next section reviews the change message as a primary vehicle to create change readiness within districts.

**Change message.** The change message serves as a vehicle to address the social dynamics of processing information as a group or organizational whole. The change message is referred to as a “mechanism for creating readiness for change” (Bernerth, 2004, p. 41). Armenakis et al. (1993) identify two issues a change message should address: the need for change (discrepancy) and the individual and collective efficacy
(perceived ability to change). The message can be presented in various oral or written forms (face-to-face in presentation or meetings, interactive technology, audio/video recording, newsletters, reports, and memos). However, Lengel and Draft (1988) urges leaders to use rich media for difficult or non-routine communication. In other words, a leader should use oral communication for all non-routine communication and for messages that could be misconstrued. However, some researchers feel a change message should include additional elements.

Bernerth (2004), Armenakis and Bedeian (1999), and Armenakis and Harris (2002) identify five elements that appear to motivate an individual to support change when incorporated into a change message. These five components are also the five change beliefs that contribute to change readiness in an organization. These five beliefs, discrepancy (Guha et al., 1997; Kwahk & Lee, 2008), principal support (Damanpour, 1991; Raferty et al., 2013), appropriateness (Anderson, 2008; McKay, Kuntz & Naswall, 2013; Neves, 2009), self-efficacy (Cunningham et al., 2002; Eby et al., 2000; Kwahk & Lee, 2008; Rafferty et al., 2013), and valence (McKay et al., 2013), are the focus of various change readiness studies. In other word the five change beliefs and the five essential components of an effective change message are identical elements.

**Discrepancy.** Discrepancy is one of six key characteristics of organizational readiness, part of Galpin’s Change Model, the Disconfirmation step in Schien’s model of Creating Motivation to Change, and one of the assumptions in the Theory of Business. Discrepancy is establishing a need for change. A need for change is identifying the difference between the current state of the organization and the desired level of
performance for the same organization (Katz & Kahn, 1978). A discrepancy in data is a
difference or a gap.

A leader should be knowledgeable with gathering and analyzing data needed to
identify gaps between present and desired states in an organization. Once gaps are
identified, leaders have a better grasp on the reason for or the need for change during the
communication process. Kotter and Schlesinger (1979) urge leaders to use
communication early in the change process. Those affected by new initiatives or
mandates need informed of the rationale for the change. Leaders should communicate
early as well as use convincing communication when preparing staff for change (Burke,
2008).

Kotter and Schlesinger (1979), in a study conducted by Barrett et al. (2005),
researchers believed organizations might benefit from a stage-specific approach to
organizational change. These researchers examined the improvement of workplace health
and safety in a manufacturing company. The study revealed an increase in safety
intervention when workers understood the need for change or the why of the change
during the earlier phase or the pre-contemplative (or unfreezing) stage of the change
process. A more recent qualitative study examined individual’s perception to change.
Upon analyzing the data collected in the study “having a need to know why a change is
occurring” (p.502) was discovered to be a reoccurring statement of participates in focus
groups (Nixon, 2014). Thus, communication of a discrepancy between the reality and
vision of an organization or understanding the why change should happen is important.
Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is another component considered important for change readiness. Self-efficacy is the belief that an individual or the organization can successfully change (Armenakis et al., 2007). Self-efficacy aligns to the learning element in Schein’s Creating Motivation to Change Model. Previous mentioned studies by Neves (2009) and Kwahk and Lee (2008) resulted in strengthening empirical research for self-efficacy as a determining factor of change readiness. Neves (2009) in his study of public university employees established a positive correlation between self-efficacy and an individual’s commitment to change, which is noted as an element of readiness. The study by Kwahk and Lee (2008) introducing new technology in Korea established a positive correlation between self-efficacy and readiness for change.

In addition, a study by Rafferty et al. (2013) examined employee readiness for small and large scale change in five Australian organizations. This study focused on the contribution of self-efficacy on the level of readiness for change. Three-hundred-eleven participants, a return rate of 39.9%, completed a readiness survey. Fifty-three percent of the participants were female with a mean age of 32.5 years old. Results of this study indicate a positive correlation between self-efficacy and change readiness.

Cunningham et al. (2002) conducted a readiness studies in the area of health. The researchers used a sample of 880 health professionals from a large Canadian hospital to conduct a quantitative study focusing on variables of change readiness. A random sampling method was used in the study. A sequential regression equation was used to predict the variables associated with change readiness. The analysis of the data from this study revealed an active job, self-efficacy, participative decision-making, job satisfaction,
and contribution to change effort as key factors associated with change readiness. However, the field of sampling may limit the ability to generalize to other businesses as well as educational organizations.

On the other hand, two studies show contradictory results for self-efficacy’s contribution to change readiness. Eby et al. (2000) conducts a study examining the relationship of self-efficacy and readiness in regard to large-scale change. This study was conducted using a Likert questionnaire. Each was from two divisions of a national sales organization. The participants were assigned to teams of 4-10 members. The mean age for the participants was 36 years old with an average tenure of seven years with the company. Forty-six percent of the participants in the study held a college degree. A Schwoerer and Rosen self-efficacy scale was adapted to determine the level of self-efficacy of the participants. The results indicate no support for self-efficacy as a condition for readiness. Additionally, the previously mentioned McKay et al. (2013) study indicates no correlation between self-efficacy and participation, an additional known element of readiness. In other words, self-efficacy was not identified as a factor of change readiness in these two studies.

**Appropriateness.** Appropriateness is the belief that what is being changed is the correct choice of action (Armenakis et al., 2007) to address the gap or circumstance. Appropriateness is also mentioned as an important assumption in the Theory of Business. The relationship of appropriateness in relation to change readiness is a focus of several studies. One quantitative study conducted by Neves, in 2009, found a positive correlation between appropriateness of change and an individuals’ readiness for change. Later,
McKay, et al. (2013) explored the impact of communication, participation, and affective organizational commitment on change readiness using twenty-one government organizations experiencing large-scale changes. The results of this study revealed positive correlation between appropriateness and change readiness (McKay et al., 2013).

Anderson (2008) also conducted an experiment on appropriateness. However, appropriateness was found to negatively correlate to change readiness. This particular experiment was conducted in a controlled environment using Holt’s readiness for school change tool to determine the level of readiness of each participant. In this particular study, conflicting results suggested the introduction of appropriateness as a variable in the controlled environment negatively affected the participant’s level of readiness for change.

**Principal support.** The next belief contributing to change readiness is principal support. Principal support is the degree an organization or the leaders of an organization support change (Armenakis et al., 2007). In other words, positive attitudes towards change are considered principal support. Holt et al. (2007), during his study, identified support of leadership for change an important element while developing his readiness scale. Damanpour (1991) while conducting a meta-analysis of empirical literature determined a position correlation between innovation and support from leadership. Respectively, innovation connects to openness, another element of readiness; thus, ultimately connecting principal support with change readiness.

A previously mentioned study by Rafferty et al. (2013) including public agencies in Australia, also examined principal support and readiness. According to the results of
this study, perceived organizational support is considered a factor in change readiness during small-scale change. However, this correlation is only partially supported by data from the study during large-scale change.

**Personal valence.** The last of the five beliefs contributing to change readiness is personal valence. Personal valence is believing change will be self-beneficial (Armenakis et al., 2009). Visagie & Steyn (2011) conducted a quantitative study on a South African telecommunication company experiencing a long-term change within the organization. Due to change within the company, widespread apprehension and uncertainty existed among the employees. A self-administered survey was completed by 113 respondents, which represents a 30% response rate. Sixty-three percent of the participants were male. The participants held jobs at various levels within the company. The mean age of the participants were 35 years-old with varying levels of education. According to the results of the study, a moderately significant relationship exists between personal valence and change readiness. In addition, Holt et al. (2007) in a previously mentioned study regarding change readiness as a multidimensional construct found readiness influenced by personal valence.

**Influence Change Strategies**

Leaders realize “change is an integral part of the twenty-first century and leadership within the organization must be able to manage discontinuous change” (Spaid and Parsons, 1999, p. 13). Without successful preparation for change, organizational demise is a viable possibility. Yukl and Lepeinger (2004) believe flexible leadership, (efficacy, people and change-oriented behavior) is the key to a leader’s ability to
successful change. Nonetheless, a leaders’ use of change strategies can vary widely when preparing a school district for change.

Bandura (1977) as well as Fishbein and Azjen (1975) identify two strategies leaders might find valuable for creating change readiness at the organizational level; thus, creating change readiness within a school district: persuasive communication and active participation. Armenakis et al., (1993) recognize a third strategy valuable for creating change readiness: management of external sources. Armenakis et al. (1993) believe leaders can intervene in the process of change readiness using these three strategies of influence.

**Persuasive communication.** One strategy used by an organizational leader during times of change to convey discrepancy and efficacy is persuasive communication (Armenakis et al., 1993). Communication is an element supported by multiple studies as a contributor to create readiness for change. Guha et al. (1997) in a multiple-case analysis discovers supporting evidence for open communication of top leaders as a contributor to readiness. In addition, McKay’s et al. (2013) study of 21 government organizations found that adequate communication is helpful in reducing resistance to change. Using two questionnaires, Soumaja et al. (2011) conducted a study on quality communication and change readiness using a convenience sample of 56 post graduate students enrolled in a management program. Results of the study indicate a strong positive correlation between quality communication and change readiness. However, a study conducted by Bouckenooghe (2008) of fifty-three Belgium organizations indicates only partial support for a correlation between communication and change readiness.
**Active participation.** As early as 1948, research was being conducted on readiness factors, the element of participatory management on readiness factors to be exact. Coch and French (1948) conducted a number of studies using manufacturing companies. These studies found a correlation between active participation and lowering resistance to change. However, in 2008, a study by Bouckenooghe found no correlation between participation and change readiness in his study of fifty-three Belgium organizations.

Later in 2012, Hetkamp conducted a study regarding the aspects of participatory management, and the effects of this type of management on organizational change. The study focused on the European steel industry. A cross sectional ex post facto design was used to manipulate variables. The design was used to test the influence of each variable on the other. Data was collected using a survey that was posted on a website in multiple languages. According to the study, participation in decisions positively correlates to change readiness.

Two other aforementioned studies also tested active participation as an element affecting change readiness. Eby et al.’s (2000) study of a national sales organization indicated support for active participation as an indicator of change readiness. Also, McKay et al. (2012) discovered a positive correlation between active participation and readiness in this study of twenty-one governmental agencies experiencing large scale change.

**Management of external sources.** Management of external sources is using media to assist leaders in communicating change or in supporting change efforts. Expert
sources from outside the organizations can add credibility to a change message (Armenakis et al., 1993) as well as a change effort. Media such as radio and/or local television can lend support to current educational issues (Armenakis et al., 1993) that originate at various levels of the government to include the local level. Numerous internal avenues of technology also exist available for superintendents to connect and disseminate change messages. These include email, social media, the district website, and personal blog sites. External avenues of communication for written media of communication include magazines and newspapers (Armenakis, et al, 1993). Gist (1987) believes external sources bring confirmation and believability to information in a superintendent’s change message. Therefore, releasing information to external sources could benefit the district during a change campaign. In other words, the district would release pertinent information to media partners strengthening and adding validity to the internal organizational change message; thus, adding momentum to the change initiative.

Conclusion

Research reveals up to 70% of all new initiatives fail (Beer, & Nohria, 2000; Choi, 2011; Pelletiere, 2006; Smith, 2002; Soumyaja et al., 2011). Therefore, it is imperative that educational organizations are prepared for changes such as school reform, mandates, and organizational changes. From Lewin’s Change Model to Schein’s expansion of Lewin’s original model, the unfreezing stage, or the readiness phase, has been considered an essential precursor for successful change. From individual change beliefs to the social dynamics of a leader communicating a message of change in a systematic and systemic way at the organizational level, Schein’s culture of motivation
(i.e., disconfirmation, survival anxiety, and psychological safety as well as learning anxiety) is needed to create a context to encourage innovation rather than resistance. In addition, change readiness at the organizational level becomes a social process. Therefore, communication, the change message, becomes a critical element for achieving district readiness. Since a change message is essential for successful change, attention should be given to the five components of an effective change message. These components are also elements of Schein’s change model.

In addition to components of communication change, Armenakis et al., (1993) identifies three influence strategies (persuasive communication, management of external information, and active participation) as effective strategies in preparing organizations for change. This study aims to identify and explore strategies Superintendents have used when preparing their organizations for change. The results of this study will provide insight into leaders preparing our educational organizations for change readiness at the district level in Ohio.
Chapter 3: Methods

Introduction

Although organizational change and change readiness have been explored in the past, little is known about how current educational initiatives and mandates in Ohio are changing our schools and districts across Ohio. Nor has much research focused on the process used by superintendents to prepare a school district and educators for a continually changing environment experience by educational organizations today. Therefore, the purpose of this descriptive qualitative case study was the identification of how a climate is created and the description of strategies that serve as supports and barriers for superintendents that had currently worked in Ohio to unfreeze the culture of his or her school district to prepare staff for organizational change during the time of this study. Determining the critical elements and strategies used by superintendents led to discussions of successful interventions at the district level that assisted and hindered in preparing his or her staff for change. This study allows the researcher to assist other superintendents in overcoming barriers and preparing districts for organizational change.

Chapter three presents the descriptive qualitative methods used in this case study. Research questions, design of this study, description of informers, and analysis of data reviewed are presented in chapter three. Ethical considerations are also discussed in this chapter. Lastly, risks, benefits, and protections of the participants’ confidentiality are discussed.
Research Questions

A plethora of literature is readily available in the area of change readiness. Despite the extensive literature providing guidance on organizational change readiness, outcomes for organizational change continue to result in high rates of failure (Burke, 2011). Change agents continue to focus research efforts on preparing people within their organizations for those changes as well as implementing change (Walinga, 2008). This study focused on preparing for change using the following research questions:

1. What conditions do superintendents feel are critical to the climate of a school district during the unfreezing phase of the change process?
2. What strategies do superintendents in Ohio school districts identify as supporting the process of creating organizational change readiness?
3. How are these strategies used to create organizational change readiness?
4. What strategies do superintendents in Ohio school districts identify as hindering the process of creating organizational change readiness?
5. How are these strategies used during the process?

Design of Study

A qualitative methodology was used in this study to answer the five research questions focused on Change Readiness. Qualitative research is a method of research used in past studies to investigate change within an educational organization (i.e., McDaniel-Johnson, 2007). This type of research strives to find a deeper understanding of a concept or experience. Patton (2002) characterizes qualitative research as a method used for dynamic circumstances. Education is an ever changing environment; therefore, a
school district is an environment with dynamic circumstances. In addition, qualitative methodology research has been used to study educational organizations in the past. For these reasons, the researcher felt qualitative research was an appropriate methodology for this study.

The researcher also chose a case study to explore the research questions. Qualitative case studies are bounded studies (Creswell, 2013). A case study is a type of study that is bounded by a shared experience or phenomena (i.e., McDaniel-Johnson, 2007). Stake (1995) explains that case studies are investigated because,

We are interested in them [informers] for both their uniqueness and commonality. We would like to hear their [informers] stories….with a sincere interest in learning how they [informers] function in their ordinary pursuits and milieus and with a willingness to put aside many presumptions while we [researcher] learn (p.1).

Considering this explanation of a case study, the researcher used a case study because it was best aligned for the purpose of this study, exploring change readiness at the organizational level. Yin (2003) speaks of an opportunity to explore individuals and or organizations as a case study. Exploring a number of superintendents from different school districts allows the researcher to grasp an understanding of change readiness across different contexts. Therefore, a case study appropriately fits the needs of the research conducted in this study.

A case study is also designed to address an experience or experiences shared by a number of people. All participating informants, or superintendents, were affected, at
some time, by various mandates and initiatives at federal, state, and local levels. According to Bolman and Deal (2003), a case study is an empirical study of a phenomenon that investigates real-life contexts. A case study was used because all informers are sharing a like phenomenon (i.e., implementing change at the district level within their district). Therefore, this key approach, a case study, ensured the topic of change readiness and strategies engaged by superintendents to prepare organizations were well explored, discussed (Baxter, 2008) and revealed. For these reasons, a case study is designed to speak to the experiences of superintendents engaged in the process of preparing their district for organizational change.

Role of the Researcher

A qualitative researcher serves as the primary instrument for both data collection and data analysis (Merriam, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) during a research study. As a qualitative researcher, interpretations are a reflection of his or her background and personal history (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 2003). The researcher’s primary role in this study was that of an instrument to collect and evaluate the data of the informers or superintendents in school districts throughout Ohio.

Since the primary instrument for this study is the research, it is important to provide background information about the researcher and any knowledge and/or experience in this area of research (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002). At the time of this study, the researcher was an educator for twenty-one years. This educational experience gave additional insight to the data collection and analysis processes during this study. The researcher was employed by multiple districts as a teacher, teacher leader, principal
and central office administrator as well as an evaluator for both teachers and principals. However, the researcher was not currently or previously employed by the school districts or superintendents participating in this study. Therefore, this allowed the researcher to apply a knowledgeable yet balanced approach when interpreting from the participants.

Since the researcher of this study was also employed as a central office administrator, the researcher was familiar with the daily plights of a superintendent. In addition, the researcher had previously implemented change at the district level for multiple educational organizations as well as had been a recipient of change in multiple school districts as a teacher and administrator. This experience assisted and enhanced the flow of two-way communication during the interview process as well as enriched the depth of answers during the face-to-face interview process. However, the descriptions of climate and strategies were unique for each superintendent according to his or her own perspective of the lived experience. Since trust and rapport were important while engaging in a qualitative study (Glesne, 2011), the aforementioned familiarity with day-to-day plights and overall experience as an educator and affiliation as a professional educator from Ohio also assisted with building a relationship of trust and rapport with informers during the interview process and throughout the study.

The change agent, researcher of the study, in the past had prepared staff for change at the teacher, group, building, and district level as a teacher-leader, building principal, curriculum consultant, and as a central office administrator. The researcher had also served as an external and internal facilitator at multiple districts implementing the Ohio Improvement Process (OIP), a systematic school improvement process used by
school districts in Ohio. The OIP is an appropriate change process used for school improvement and school reform.

The OIP process utilizes strategies linked to Schein’s readiness components such as disconfirmation, survival anxiety, and psychological / learning anxiety. Therefore, the researcher was familiar and experienced with Ohio’s process prior to this study. The researcher previously trained building coaches as well as facilitated and implemented teacher-based-team meetings, literacy initiatives and programs, and building-wide data-based decision-making instructional planning initiatives. The researcher trained building coaches to implement initiatives and programs using readiness components and strategies included in this study. This training and implementation resulted in an improved school rating from improvement status to independent status within three years. Therefore during this study, the researcher was familiar with the readiness components studied and their application to school improvement conditions and school reform. Importantly enough, the researcher attempted to maintain neutrality and objectivity during data collection and data analysis. More importantly, the research maintained the rational of the ambiguity; yet, kept sight of identifying logic and connectedness in data.

**Informers**

Informers for this qualitative descriptive case study were current superintendents of an Ohio public school district. A purposeful selection of maximum variation was used for this study. A purposeful sample is a selection of information rich informers (Patton, 2002). All informers had similar titles, similar leadership roles and experienced similar
federal and state changes. In addition, all informers spent multiple, consecutive years (more than three) at their current school district.

Although a purposeful selection of maximum variation method was used, participation was limited to superintendents of public school districts in Ohio who have served in their current position at least three consecutive years and had recently or were currently experiencing change. The superintendents who participated in the study had either prepared or were currently preparing his/her district for change, specifically the readiness stage of the change process. The intention of this study was not to represent all school districts geographically or demographically across the United States. Instead, the purpose was to gain insight into elements of educational climates needed and strategies that support or hinder superintendents preparing school districts for change at the district level.

The researcher felt it important not to limit an understanding of change readiness, the results, to a specific initiative. Rather, the study was designed to allow for superintendents to reflect on preparing staff for change in general. The researcher also felt, for purposes of this study, shared experiences were needed to properly analyze the data. Recently, public school districts in Ohio had experienced several federal and state initiatives and mandates. Therefore purposeful sampling was confined to Ohio public school districts to bind the case study to experiences in recent public educational issue in Ohio. This sampling strengthens the principles of a bounded case study.

There are varying opinions on the adequate number of informers a researcher should interview in a qualitative case study. According to Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, and
Fontenot (2013), there are three different avenues a researcher can use to justify the sample size used in a study; these justifications include: cite recommendations of researchers, cite sample sizes from other studies, or estimate when data will reach saturation level. Data saturation is the result of collecting more of the same findings. This researcher decided to use two of the three criteria (researcher recommendations and saturation) to justify the number of informers needed for this study. For a case study, Creswell (2013) recommends no more than four or five informers in a single study. Therefore, this study began with a sample size of four informers. Nonetheless, researchers differ on the optimal sample size needed for studies.

In qualitative case studies, Yin (2009) recommends using six as the ideal sample size to interview. Creswell (2007; 2013), however, waives between three to five informers and four to five informers as the correct sample size for qualitative case studies. Unfortunately, small samples can cause problems due to the individuality of each case (Patton, 2002), sample or informer. The maximum variation method brings strength to small samples; consequently, any common patterns that emerge across great variations should be valued as shared patterns (Patton, 2002) or themes. Therefore, although all superintendents who participated in this study had similar titles, similar leadership roles, experienced similar federal and state initiatives and mandated changes, and shared experience of multiple years (more than three) as superintendent at his/her current district; the informers were maximum variation samples in regard to age, gender, years of experience as a superintendent, background experience, as well as geographic location and demographics of the school district.
With the maximum variation sampling method, a small sample size was strengthened. In summary, the researcher interviewed four superintendents chosen using the purposeful selection of maximum variation sampling method. One informer had more than fifteen years of experience as a superintendent; two informers had seven to twelve years of experience as a superintendent; and one informer had less than six years of experience as a superintendent. Charmaz (2006) urges the researcher to stop collecting data for there is no new data to add insight to the research. Saturation of data was reached after the initial four interviews. Therefore, no additional informers were interviewed.

The researcher recruited the first four informers, the Ohio public school district superintendents, by phone, email, or using face-to-face conversation. The researcher gave each of the initial informers an overview of the study and requested each superintendent to grant a face-to-face interview. A follow-up correspondence by email or letter, whichever the superintendent preferred, was sent as a reminder of the face-to-face interview scheduled.

The informers for the study were chosen because each was considered by the researcher as well as his/her peers as a great leader. In addition each made monumental contributions to his/her district and to the field of education. Each of these forward-thinkers has made significant accomplishments during his or her career.

**Data Collection and Instrument Design**

**Interviews.** Data was obtained to answer the research questions for this study through interviews. During face-to-face interviews the researcher asked each informer a
series of questions focused on elements of a climate and strategies used by the superintendent when preparing his or her organization for change. According to Creswell (2014), interviews are advantageous when participants cannot be directly observed. In this study, the observation method was not a viable option; therefore, face-to-face interviews were used to obtain the data. The purpose of an interview is to “allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective” (Patton, 2002, p. 341). The ability to view a situation through the perspective of an informer adds depth to data. Thus, the interview process was an appropriate method to gather data for this study. Marshall and Rossman (2011) state “an interview is literally an inter view” (p. 145). In order to attain an inter view from the informers the interviewer used the interview guide approach.

The researcher used an in-depth interviewing technique referred to as “the interview guide” (Patton, 2002, p. 343) as the primary data collection method for this study. According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), the interview guide is the most typical type of interview method used in qualitative studies. With this type of approach, the interviewer carefully and skillfully prepared topics to explore or questions to ask the informer before the interview began; however, the interviewer determined and pursued opportunities for conversation-like inquiry (Patton, 2002). This method allowed the researcher to attain the depth needed during the interview to extract rich-thick descriptive data that was needed to address the questions in this study.

The researcher also noted any observations relevant to the five research questions during the interview. In research these observational notes are referred to as field notes (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). In many qualitative studies, as in this study, the
researcher was the instrument used to collect data. Therefore, the interviewer annotated field notes during the interview remaining cognizant of relevant information during the interview. Note taking proved to assist as a cue to move the interview forward by drawing attention to noteworthy information (Patton, 2002). The researcher corrected and edited field notes immediately following the interview while details were still vivid.

The researcher used the natural setting to collect data from the informers, or superintendents. A natural setting is one in which the informer has experienced the problem, the issue (Creswell, 2014), or phenomenon. Although the researcher did not observe the superintendent in his/her natural setting interacting with stakeholders, the interviews were conducted in natural settings. The researcher gained access to the natural setting, school district site, of each superintendent to conduct interviews. Although interviews are typically used in qualitative studies, this process has limitations.

The data produced by interviews are interpreted by the interviewer (Creswell, 2013); therefore, data produced by interviews has limitations. In addition, data collected using the interview process is difficult to replicate (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Secondly, Saldana (2013) claims coding of data is not a “precise science; it is primarily an interpretive act” (p. 4). Therefore, the reliability of the data is reliant on the interviewer; additionally, correct data interpretation is heavily reliant on the researcher’s ability and expertise in data analysis. For these reasons, interview data is difficult to replicate during the collection and coding process. The data in this study was collected and interpreted by the researcher; therefore, reliability of the data and processes were important to obtain accurate results.
Interviewee reliability was vital during the data collection. Therefore, an interview protocol was developed and used during each face-to-face interview. For this study, the researcher used the interview protocol suggested by Creswell (2014, p. 164). The research protocol included a heading; instructions for the interviewer; ice-breaker question; codes for the interviewer while taking notes; twenty-five questions and suggested follow-up questions; spaces between questions for notes; final thank-you statement; and log to keep a record of documents (Creswell, 2014). Upon arriving at the site, each interviewee completed a consent form prior to the face-to-face interview. Each interview was audio recorded using a computer. The audio recordings were stored on a password protected computer. Only the researcher had access to the recordings.

According to Creswell (2014) and Sampson (2004), a pilot test will help to refine the interview questions. Therefore, two separate pilots were conducted prior to the study. During the first pilot study, an interview was conducted with one superintendent. The informer discussed and shared thoughts with the researcher about the interview protocols, interview process, and individual questions. Suggestions were made to adjust the interview procedures; therefore, the interview tool was altered making adjustments to the interview protocols and individual interview questions as needed. Since a number of adjustments were made, a second pilot was conducted in the same manner using a different informer. The superintendent was interviewed and the informer discussed and shared thoughts with the researcher regarding the interview process. Minor adjustments were made to individual interview questions.
The instrument and interview questions used to collect data were designed specifically for this research study. The interview questions included twenty-five questions, to include follow-up questions, which were concentrated in three major areas. Seven questions were focused on change; one question discussed the informer’s position and role as superintendent; ten questions focused on change readiness; seven questions concentrated on elements of a climate during the initial phase of change. All interview questions were open-ended.

During the interview, the researcher noted thoughts and reflections related to the questions in the margins as field notes. The researcher simultaneously wrote notes and reflected upon the interpretation and understanding of the data collected during the interview process. However, the reflection process does not stop after the interview.

Layder (as cited by Saldana, 2013) urges researchers to use a pre-coding method soon after the interview, a method which includes highlighting and adding additional notes, to reflectively journal about the field notes created during the interview. However, Creswell (2014) suggests a different pre-coding process. Creswell (2014) suggests labeling field notes using code words in the margins; then, organizing the labeled data by bracketing chunks of data. Creswell’s (2014) pre-coding method was used for all field notes annotated during the interviews. The researcher used this method as a way of processing thoughts and melding ideas together. Once all interviews and pre-coding of interviews were completed, the recorded interviews and field notes were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist.
Privacy and Confidentiality

Informers are the primary source for data used in this study. The collection of data was guided by the Project Outline Form submitted and approved by the Ohio University Institutional Review Board. No identifiable information was shared with any individual not associated with this study. Only rich data pertinent to this study were shared with scholars in this dissertation and in any future forms of this data in articles, research and/or presentations.

Electronic data were placed on a password protected computer. The researcher was the only person with the password. All paper copies of data were stored in a locked file cabinet. Each informer and his/her district were assigned pseudo names to protect the identity of the superintendents and their respective districts. The master list of individuals were encrypted and stored on a password protected computer. Although the individuals were assigned pseudo names, the gender of the informers was not changed. The location and identifiable details of superintendents and their respective districts were changed for confidentiality purposes. In other words, details made public in this study may be altered or generalized to protect the identity of the superintendent and their respective district.

Data Analysis

Once the interview data and documents are collected, Creswell (2014) recommends using three steps to analyze the data which include organizing and preparing the data, reading and looking at all the data, and coding all the data. However, Marshall and Rossman (2011) cite seven distinct phases as the preferred analytical procedure for
process which include “organizing the data, immersing oneself in the data, generating categories and themes, coding the data, offering interpretations through analytic memos, searching for alternative understandings, and writing the report or other format for presenting the results of the study” (p.209). Saldana (2013) advises the use of a multi-cycle process to analyze data. This data analysis process consists of a first cycle phase, an after the first cycle coding phase, a second cycle coding method, and an after the second cycle coding phase (Saldana, 2013). Nonetheless, during the process of analyzing data the researcher relies heavily on intuitive and interpretive instincts allowing categories, themes, and concepts to emerge (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). For this study the researcher used Saldana’s (2013) multi-cycle coding phase to analyze the data collected during this study.

Data Analysis begins soon after the interview process is completed. For this process to occur, the data was prepared for analysis by reading and interpreting field notes and transcribing the interview transcripts. An important next step is organizing your data. Organizing is the process of sorting data into categories by type and source (Creswell, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The researcher organized the data collected into categories by type (transcripts and field notes.) Next, the researcher read the transcripts several times noting important key ideas in the margin. Noting key ideas during the first reading is a process suggested by Creswell (2013). The first read gave the researcher an opportunity to be immersed in the data; during this reading process the researcher began memoing (Creswell, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Saldana, 2013). Saldana (2013) suggests a three step reading – analytical memoing process.
Therefore, the researcher analyzed the data collected during the study beginning with Saldana’s suggested three step reading – analytical memoing process (Saldana, 2013). The researcher read the documents focusing on the data holistically during the first reading. Memos were noted when appropriate. The researcher conducted a second reading annotating memos as well as noting additional analytic memos when appropriate. During the third reading of data, the researcher annotated mostly analytic memos. A different color highlighter was assigned to each superintendent interview. The specific color was used to highlight key words and annotated notes.

Once all interview data were organized, read multiple times, analytical memoing applied, and interviews transcribed, the next step was to code the data (Creswell, 2014; Saldana, 2013). Stake (1995) reminds us, “Good research is not about good methods as much as it is about good thinking” (p.19). Coding is a system of combining the data into groups which can be labeled and used to build a detailed description of the similar data collected (Creswell, 2013). According to Saldana (2013), “a code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data (p.3)”. This process assisted the researcher in eliminating data not containing rich-thick description or a thought not worthy of being included in the study. For these reasons, the researcher used a manual coding method so visual, auditory, and tactile modalities could be employed during the coding process. Accordingly, the researcher began the manual coding process utilizing eight general questions suggested by Saldana (2013).
During the first cycle of coding, Saldana (2013) suggests several coding methods; these subcategories of coding methods include Grammatical, Elemental, Affective, Literary and Language, Exploratory, Procedural, and Theme coding. Since some strategies have been pre-identified in Chapter Two of the literature review as research-based climate conditions and intervening actions that contribute to the readiness level of an organization (e.g., disconfirmation, survival anxiety, psychological safety, learning anxiety, persuasive communication, active participation, management of external media), priori categories were likely to emerge in the data. These seven priori codes as well as additional emergent codes materialized during the coding process. The optimal amount of codes after the first sort is 40-50 codes (Foss & Waters, 2007); Creswell (2013) recommends no more than 25-30 categories during the first sort. For this study, the researcher completed the first sort with over 60 codes placed into approximately 40 files (i.e., communication, communication problem, communication celebration; develop a vision, vision; disconfirmation, discrepancy; lack of understanding, understanding). The researcher developed a master list of codes upon completion of the first cycle of coding. A master list of codes includes the full code name and a brief description or definition of the code (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). A master list of codes allows other researchers to use codes with ease when replicating the study. The master code list is included in chapter four.

Saldana (2013) urges beginning coders to “start with a combination of generic coding methods as a beginning approach to your data and analysis; but, remain open to changing them [coding methods] if they are not generating substantive discoveries for
you” (p. 65). Therefore, the researcher used the Descripting Coding Method as a starting point for the first cycle of data coding.

The Descriptive Coding Method is one that identifies the topic of communicated thoughts or words; this method of coding is good for beginning coders (Saldana, 2013). Descriptive Coding is appropriate for all types of qualitative studies, to include coding interview data (Saldana, 2013). The information revealed during the interviews was qualitative interview data; therefore, it is appropriate to use the Descriptive Method during the first coding cycle of the process. However, because the researcher was open to other methods of coding, the researcher realized In Vivo coding and Priori coding needed to be included in the first cycle of data coding to enhance the process.

After the first cycle of coding was completed, post-coding transitions were completed using the files from the first cycle of coding (Saldana, 2013). The goal of the Post-Coding Transition phase is not to “take you to the next level” (Saldana, 2013, p. 187), instead, it is a time to reflect on your work and make new connections and discoveries. During this phase the transitional method of Tabletop Categories was used and first cycle coding results were analyzed. Tabletop Categories is a method of coding by chunking data, placing the data on pieces of paper, categorizing the files into piles, labeling the categories, and mapping each category for processes and structures (Saldana, 2013).

There were several methods available for the researcher to analyze data during the second cycle of coding. Saldana (2013) specifically named Pattern Coding, Focused Coding, Axial Coding, Theoretical Coding, Elaborative Coding and Longitudinal Coding.
as viable methods for analyzing qualitative data. During the second cycle, data were analyzed using the Pattern Coding method. The Pattern Coding method pulled chunks of information together into smaller sets or themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This type of coding was appropriate for developing major themes (Saldana, 2013).

**Reliability and Validation**

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) defined validity as “assessing whether the information obtained through the qualitative data collection process is accurate” (p. 211). Researchers advocate for triangulation as a method for strengthening the credibility of a qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). Triangulation as well as other methods of validation including peer review, negative case analysis, clarifying researcher bias, using rich, thick descriptive details of informers and setting, member checking, and audience review (Creswell, 2013). The researcher of this study used triangulation, clarifying researcher bias, using rich, thick descriptive detail of informer and setting, member checking, and audience review as validation measures for this study.

Triangulation is the use of different methods or to collect different types of evidence to provide corroborating evidence for results (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994). To ensure a rigorous strategy of triangulation was applied to this research study, the researcher used interviews and collect field notes in the natural setting. The natural setting for the purpose of this study was the school district where the superintendent was currently assigned. Triangulation between the different
types of data assisted in establishing credibility for this study. Interview transcripts and field notes were analyzed to strengthen the validity of the results.

Clarifying researcher bias is an additional way to strengthen the validity of a study (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1988). The researcher revealed, in a previous section, a knowledge and past experience in preparing a staff for change. The researcher had also used Schein’s change model (unfreezing phase) and various strategies with other instructional leaders to bring about change in various schools and school districts. Although the researcher recommends this change readiness model and influence strategies, an openness and eagerness to discover change readiness models and change strategies used by superintendents participating in the study brought a balance of objectivity throughout the study. The researcher understands that if our educators are prepared for change, the students benefit and our schools become more innovative. Therefore, the researcher felt objectivity when reflecting on change readiness and change strategies were important. Although the researcher had strong opinions regarding the change readiness models and change strategies presented in this study, exploring change readiness from a different perspective, one of various superintendents was welcomed.

The next strategy to strengthen or validate the study is the rich, thick descriptive narrative which allows readers to decide if this study is transferable to others settings and situations (Creswell, 2013; 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988). Keeping the identity of each informer protected, the researcher used rich, thick description for both informers and settings in this study. These descriptions enhance the ability to transfer the
results of the study to other educational samples and organizations. Rich, thick
descriptions were also used to report results of the study or the discoveries and findings.

The researcher shared with each superintendent the interpretations of the ideas
and comments shared during the interview. This serves as a method of strengthening the
validity of the data. This strategy is termed member checking. Member checking is a
discussion between the researcher and the informers about the ideas communicated
during an interview (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Saldana, 2013). Member checking is a
process of asking informers to review the “semi-polished or polished product, such as the
major finding, themes, case analysis, descriptions, and so forth” advocated by Creswell
(2014, p.202). A follow-up discussion by phone or email was completed with each
superintendent to ensure accuracy of the interpretation process. Informers checked
interpretations of interviews for accuracy. This member checking process was used to
ensure the researcher’s interpretation of the data was an accurate record of the
participant’s responses. This process involved the researcher presenting the final report to
the participants of the study for an opinion on the accuracy of the account (Creswell,
2013; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Of course, informers will be contacted if
ambiguities exist with data throughout the process.

The researcher also conducted a credibility triangulation once the final rough draft
was completed. A credibility triangulation, or face validity, is also called an audience
review. This type of triangulation is said to be the ultimate test of credibility (Patton,
2002). The credibility triangulation is a process where the researcher attempts to
establish credibility by soliciting reactions from people who will use the findings (Patton,
2002). One educator (Administrator), one current or prior Superintendent, one Board of Education Member, and one Community Member provided feedback on the believable and reasonability of the data and results of the study. Credibility triangulation was positive.

During this qualitative study, the researcher felt validity or credibility was important. Patton (2002) believes credibility is dependent upon rigorous methods, the researcher, and belief in the value of inquiry (qualitative). To ensure credibility in this study, the collection of data was systematic and the researcher remained cognizant to details during the collection process. In addition, the researcher was the instrument for collecting and analyzing the data in this qualitative study. The researcher’s credibility is plausible as a result of extensive experience and knowledge in the area being studied. Lastly, this researcher felt the qualitative case study methods used was a valid and worthwhile method to acquire knowledge and understanding pertaining to the research questions.

**Assumptions / Limitations / Delimitations**

The researcher assumed the informers provided honest responses to questions during the interview process. However, the researcher realized there may be some informers who were not comfortable discussing certain topics (i.e. politically motivated topics such as mandates).

The limitations of this study included a narrow focus on a population of superintendents. This study gathered data on a small selection of superintendents working in public school districts in one state, Ohio. The limited number of participants in the
study narrowed the scope for the ability to generalize the findings to superintendents in other states, other types of schools facing changes as well as other organizations outside of education.

Summary

This research is an important step in the direction of understanding organizational change readiness. With a plethora of top-down mandates affecting educators today, leaders need to obtain efficient ways to facilitate educational reform rather than passively comply with state and national policies. As leaders, we must dedicate ample time and effort to ensuring balance and alignment of external forces at state and local levels, mandates, to the vision of our school district and the external forces at our local level.
Chapter 4: Organize, Analyze, and Synthesize Data

Introduction

The purpose of this descriptive case study was to explore elements superintendents feel are needed in a climate for successful change within a school district. Additionally, this study was to identify and explore the use of strategies that served as supports and/or hindrances for superintendents currently working in Ohio public schools when unfreezing district culture or preparing his/her staff for organizational change.

The results of this study are organized into three major themes (climate, supporting strategies, and hindering strategies) and presented in Chapter Four. The results address five research questions presented in Chapter One. Results of this study address the following research questions:

1. What conditions do superintendents feel are critical to the climate of a school district during the unfreezing phase of the change process?
2. What strategies do superintendents in Ohio school districts identify as supporting the process of creating organizational change readiness?
3. How are these strategies used to create organizational change readiness?
4. What strategies do superintendents in Ohio school districts identify as hindering the process of creating organizational change readiness?
5. How are these strategies used during the process?

Additionally, Chapter Four provides details of findings within each theme.
Chapter Four begins with a review of the three processes used to collect, organize and analyze data. Next, informers are introduced using a short summary of characteristics and major viewpoints emphasized during his/her interview. Next, themes are introduced, data are presented and patterns as well as outliers for each theme are discussed. In conclusion, a summary of emerging patterns and synthesized data found throughout the analysis process is presented.

**Data Collection**

Data to answer the five research questions was obtained through the interview process. Each interview was audio recorded by the researcher using a computer. The researcher also annotated field notes annotated during the interview by the researcher. The researcher concurrently annotated field notes using codes while interviewing the superintendents when appropriate. The following codes were used during the interviews: Gap(G); Urgency(U); Training/Formal -Informal(T-F/IF); Role Model(RM); Persuasive Communication (P-C); Active Participation(AP); Management of External Sources(EX). The researcher corrected and edited field notes immediately following the interview while the experience of the interview was still vivid and rich in detail.

**Review of Data Organization**

The researcher prepared data for the analysis process. During this step, the researcher organizes the data by sorting documents into categories by type and source of data (Creswell, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The researcher sorted all electronic data from interviews and written document data in preparation for analyzing the data. Data were organized and prepared for analysis by placing files and documents on a
password protected computer for organizational purposes. This step helped to protect the identity of the informers. Next, the researcher stored all paper copies and documents in a locked file cabinet while not being used. Each informer and his/her respective district received pseudo names to protect the identity of the superintendents and their respective districts. Lastly, the researcher organized and read all data multiple times (i.e., transcripts, field notes).

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis began with Saldana’s suggested three step reading – analytical memoing process (Saldana, 2013). The researcher read the documents focusing on the data holistically during the first reading, memoing when appropriate. The researcher conducted a second reading annotating memos as well as noting additional analytic memos when appropriate. During the third reading of data, the researcher annotated mostly analytic memos. A different color highlighter was assigned to each superintendent interview. The specific color was used to highlight key words and annotated notes. Wanda, informer number one, was assigned green. Joe, informer number two, was assigned yellow. Dr. Karl, informer number three, was assigned blue and Dr. Jeff, informer number four, was assigned orange.

The researcher read the data multiple times and noted analytic memos. Next, the researcher used Saldana’s (2013) eight recommended questions to pre-code all transcripts and documents. While using the eight questions pre-coding process ten labels emerged from the data. The ten labels included what (W); How (H); Strategies (STR); Understand (UND); Assumptions (AS); Learn (L); Included (INC); Intrigued (INT); Surprised
(SUR); Disturbed (DIST). During the pre-coding session, the researcher looked at all data objectively using the eight general questions recommended by Saldana (2013). Two questions broke into additional parts equaling ten questions, words, thoughts, or files. The researcher assigned a code word to each question or question part. Labels or files were made using index cards. All documents received codes according to the ten questions, words, thoughts or files. Next, the researcher cut apart and organized the data into piles or files according to the relativity of the data to the code/label/file. Each chunk of cut, color-coded data received a label (Al-A10). This color-code used for each chunk of data matched the highlighter previously assigned to each superintendent. Noticeable information (i.e., most emphasized views; most obvious characteristics) for each superintendent was summarized and included to introduce each informer.

First cycle coding. The researcher used a manual coding method applying visual, auditory, and tactile modalities throughout the coding process. The Descriptive Coding Method assisted in creating files by placing cut chunks of coded data in piles according to similar codes. The researcher completed the first sort with approximately 60 different stacks or files of coded data. The data was highlighted/color-coded (green-Wanda, yellow-Joe, blue-Dr. Kurt, and orange, Dr. Jeff).

The researcher developed a master list of codes. The master list of codes included the full code name and definition of the code (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The researcher placed labels on index cards and used the index cards to identify each stack of coded data. All chunks of data in each file (stack) were noted on an index card matching the color-codes previously in place (green-Wanda, yellow-Joe, blue-Dr. Kurt, and
orange, Dr. Jeff). Each file was reviewed by color (each superintendent/interview) and a summary of the data recorded on an index card. The color of the index cards matched as closely as possible the color-code previously assigned to each superintendent. Analysis of each file assisted in identifying similarities as well as differences across the four interviews (color-coded data). The researcher identified and noted patterns and outliers for each file on a summary index card (different color). Some similar or related stacks of data were combined concluding with approximately forty data files (i.e., communication, communication problem, communication celebration; develop a vision, vision; disconfirmation, discrepancy; lack of understanding, understanding).

Some codes or files emerged during data analysis that were previously presented in the literature review as research-based elements in a change readiness climate and intervening strategies that contribute to the readiness level of an organization (e.g., disconfirmation A(DISC), survival anxiety (S-AX), psychological safety (PS), learning anxiety (LA), persuasive communication (C), active participation (AP), management of external media (EX). These seven priori codes as well as other codes emerged as files during the first cycle descriptive coding process. The additional patterns were assigned codes: appropriateness (APR), change ready (CR), collaboration (COL), communication problem (C-PROB), communication celebration (C-C), social media (FB), consensus (CON), community (COM), Compliance (COMP), “Good Soldier, Create Climate (CR-CLIM), Cost of Change (COST CH), Develop a Vision (V), Discrepancy (DISC), Distributive Leadership (DL), Empathy (EMP), External Forces to Validate (EX), forced (FORCE), Gap (G), “Go for it”, humble (HL), input (IN), involve individual in training
The Table-top Category Coding method was used as a post-coding method to assist in a smooth transition from the first cycle to the second cycle of Saldana’s multi-cycle coding method (2013). During Table-top coding, the researcher was able to make multiple connections between files. The researcher arranged and rearranged files into a conceptual framework merging over 40 files into seven categories. These categories included Mandated Change, Initiative, Supporting Change Readiness, Hindering Change Readiness, Disconfirmation, Survival Anxiety, and Psychological Safety or Learning Anxiety.

**Second cycle coding.** The researcher used Pattern coding during the second-cycle of coding. This allowed the researcher to narrow the seven categories into three themes. The Second-cycle coding allowed the researcher to use a different lens to analyze data in a more concentrated approach. The three themes for this study, climate,
supporting strategies, and hindering strategies emerged during the Second-cycle coding process.

**Informer introduction.** The informers for this case study were four superintendents. Each informer, at the time of this study, was currently serving as a superintendent in an Ohio public school district. A purposeful selection of maximum variation method of selection was used to obtain superintendents for this study. All informers were limited to superintendents who had served in their current position at least three consecutive years and had recently or was currently experiencing change in their district. The researcher considered all informers chosen for this study great leaders and innovators. Each informer has made great contributions to his/her district and to the field of education. Each of these forward-thinkers has made great accomplishments during his or her career.

The informers were chosen using a maximum variation sampling method in regard to age (age range from mid-40’s – mid 60’s), gender (three male and one female), years of experience as a superintendent (between 4 years – 28 years), background experience (MS/HS Principal and Central Office; ES Principal; Business and Central office experience), as well as geographic location and demographics (Urban with low median income and high poverty; and Rural with low poverty; located across several counties) of the state. The researcher collected data for this study from the four superintendents using semi-structured interviews. One informer had more than fifteen years of experience as a superintendent; two informers had seven to twelve years of
experience as a superintendent; and one informer had less than six years of experience as a superintendent.

Wanda: Informer one. The first informer, Wanda, a female superintendent 50-60 years-old, worked in a rural, low poverty public school district with a small student population location in Ohio. Wanda held a Master’s Degree and served as a superintendent for less than six years at the time of this study. Her previous pathway leading to a superintendent position consisted of a non-traditional route through non-educational business positions as well as central office positions in various school districts. Wanda felt her non-traditional pathway to becoming a superintendent allowed her to reframe difficult situations, viewing the situations through multiple lenses; thus, giving her the ability to find the best solution verses one solution.

During the interview, Wanda spoke of various mandates that affected her educational district and community. She felt some mandates were politically driven. She felt concerned about the state level expectations of implementing mandates. Wanda referred to an implementation timeline set by the Ohio Department of Education as too aggressive for change to be successful and/or sustainable long term. Nonetheless, Wanda believes to bring change, a superintendent must first consider “what model of shared leadership” we will use to roll this out.

During the interview, Wanda revealed that her role as superintendent is not to “manage” the district. To Wanda, management tasks are important; however, these tasks can no longer be the primary focus of a superintendent’s work. Instead, setting the vision, making sure the district is aligned with the vision and being the “Communications
Director” must be the modernized role of the superintendent. Wanda advised to communicate early and with all stakeholders within the educational organization as well as the community. Communication is vital for success.

Wanda also repeatedly spoke about the importance of community. She honored and upheld the values of the community. She felt community values influencing the district included conservatism, religion, and high academic expectations.

Lastly, Wanda felt the ability to align the vision and goals with the values of the community as well as communicate an understanding of that vision and goals to the community was vital for the success of the district as well as for any change moving forward.

**Joseph: Informer two.** Joe is the next informer for this study. Joe, a male superintendent over 60 years-old, works in a rural agricultural, low to moderate income, low poverty school district with a small student population located in Ohio. Joe held a Master’s Degree and served as a superintendent for more than twenty (20) years. His previous pathway leading to a superintendent position consisted of a traditional educational one as a teacher, coach and administrative in a K-12 setting. As the interview began, Joe quickly focused on the importance of building relationships.

During the interview, Joe stated, “The most important thing is relationships. It is not policies, procedures, or dealing with mandates.” Joe also stated that we need to sometimes make the initial contact when building relationships (i.e., a phone call to the media or a new superintendent needing a mentor.) In fact, he felt extending relationship building beyond the school district walls transpired through attending community events.
It was evident that relationships are central to Joe. Joe is committed to relationship building that his staff received training on building relationships from an external trainer.

Joe, like other informers, spoke of a distributive leadership style. He believed active participation and representation of all stakeholders are important to the change process. He understood active participation and input to be the components to create ownership of programs and solutions to problems. Joe believes all stakeholders’ should be heard and all opinions equally valued in the decision-making process. However, he regards striving for consensus as a component for success. Consensus was stressed as an end product; everyone agreeing to one workable plan, solution, or compromise.

Joe fully understood compliance. He had seen many mandates throughout his career as superintendent. When the district was faced with mandates, Joe supported and followed policies keeping his opinion regarding a mandate to himself; thus, working as a role model with his district to stay in compliance with new changes. Joe prepared his staff for upcoming changes, whether mandated or not, through early communication, professional development, and the Ohio Improvement Process.

**Dr. Karl: Informer three.** The next Informer, Dr. Karl, a male between 40-50 years-old, was superintendent for an Urban, low median income, high poverty public school district in Ohio at the time of the study. Dr. Karl had attained a Doctorate and served as superintendent for less than ten years. His previous pathway leading to a superintendent position consisted of a traditional educational pathway of an educator, principal and central office administrative in the K-12 setting. Dr. Karl is a believer that “culture trumps everything”.
During the interview, Dr. Karl continuously emphasized that establishing the *why* is essential when preparing a district for change. In addition, Dr. Karl believed the *why* should be driven by logic rather than emotions. To remove emotions from this process, he utilizes a logic model during the disconfirmation phase to identify the gap between the present condition of the organization and the future preferred condition.

Dr. Karl expanded upon identifying the gap between the present and preferred condition of an organization to communicating an understanding of the *why* and the new state of change “what the change looks like, sounds like, and feels like” in the organization. He feels strongly the Ohio Improvement Process works hand-in-hand to strengthen concepts such as collaborative teams of educators and communication structures to make change successful.

Dr. Karl felt, however, mandates were expected to be implemented too quickly. However, like a “good soldier” he would implement all mandates with fidelity and integrity.

**Dr. Jeff: Informer four.** Dr. Jeff, another male informer 50-60 years-old, was superintendent of an urban, low medium income, high poverty school district in Ohio. Jeff had attained a Doctorate and at that time had served as a superintendent for a little over ten years. His previous pathway leading to becoming a superintendent consisted of a traditional educational pathway of teacher and principal in the K-12 setting. Jeff had recently finished a building project; therefore, many examples or elaborations during the interview focused on structural change. He is a superintendent that wants to “do the right thing” for kids.
Dr. Jeff’s building project involved construction across the entire district. His goal was to complete the building project; thus, restructuring the entire organization. This restructuring, grade leveling of elementary buildings, would result in cost savings and address social justice issues plaguing the district; thus, resulting in a more balanced budget and positively impacting equality in educating all students.

Dr. Jeff sought stakeholder involvement when planning and making decisions. He searched for people who had varying opinions and “had their heart in the right place – with kids”. Lastly, Jeff focused on College and Career Readiness. He appeared devoted to ensuring all students are ready for life upon graduation.

**Research Question 1: Findings**

Research Question One: What conditions do superintendents feel are critical to the climate of a school district during the unfreezing phase of the change process? During the interview, the four superintendents, or informants, discussed with the researcher experiences preparing school districts for change at the district level by unfreezing the climate. Each superintendent discussed his or her experience with disconfirmation, a sense of urgency and psychological safety the three elements of a change readiness climate. Discussion occurred throughout the interviews as responses to questions and cues or as conversations between the informer and the researcher. There are a number of findings obtained from the interviews conducted. Themes and patterns are summarized in the chapter.

**Finding one: Disconfirmation as a component.** Disconfirmation, or the need to establish validation, is a process of identifying a gap between the current state of an
organization and desired goals of the organization. Disconfirmation is many times thought of as establishing “why”. The need to establish the “why” is also thought of as the reason for, purpose of, or a validation process; consequently, the need to establish validation is disconfirmation.

Disconfirmation is naturally thought of as a gap occurring within an organization. However, during data analysis a second form of disconfirmation emerged between an outside entity or organization and the school district or school community. This data related to Drucker’s (1994) Theory of Business regarding assumptions must fit one another (between entities). Data gathered during the study were categorized and termed intra-disconfirmation and inter-disconfirmation in order to bring clarity to the findings. Intra-disconfirmation gaps are found within the organization. A form of inter-disconfirmation is a gap found between stated and perceived vision and goals or intentions of initiatives or mandates between organizations or entities.

Data collected during the interviews revealed inter-disconfirmation, gaps between the state and federal mandates and the implementation of those mandates at the local levels, in the school districts. A gap between the current state of the mandate (as perceived by the stakeholders) and the desired vision or intended/stated purpose of the mandate (i.e., state or federal) is a form of disconfirmation. To avoid confusion, during the study when a stated and perceived gap in a mandate, vision or initiative between entities emerged the term inter-disconfirmation is used for clarity purposes.

All informers experienced gaps between current circumstances and intended purposes or goals and visions within their districts as well as experienced the need to
establish the why for a change initiative at the district level. The data collected and analyzed during this study revealed Wanda, Joe, Dr. Karl and Dr. Jeff explicitly or implicitly discussed disconfirmation or the need to establish why as a component impacting the ability to create a climate for change readiness. Patterns for this theme emerged while analyzing data during this study. However, each superintendent communicated their own unique perspective and examples of disconfirmation during his/her interview. Findings from each interview are found below.

**Wanda.** During the interview, Wanda shared several examples of the readiness component disconfirmation (gaps) or communicating the why of change through examples. Wanda first shared implementation of the EMIS mandate, a system that transmits data files to the state as an inter-disconfirmation. She had identified this gap through reflecting on the process. The superintendent explained the mandate as “a needed change.” However, the disconfirmation or gap is in the communication process or the selling point.

- Wanda explains that it is difficult to communicate a need for EMIS to the educational community. She added, “The parents don’t understand [EMIS].”

- Wanda shared that EMIS is hard to sell because it is a mandate that doesn’t yield an immediate impact in the classroom. Wanda emphasized that a selling point could not sound like “Oh, this is going to impact the success of our students in the classroom”.

Wanda reflected on another mandate and discussed inter-disconfirmation in the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES). Wanda implied gaps exist between the current effects of OTES on the district climate verses the state intent and desired results for teacher evaluations. Wanda also shared another inter-disconfirmation identified regarding allocation of resources. The mandate of OTES necessitated the need for resources to be redirected; thus, causing a misalignment between the allocation of resources and the overall district vision.

- Wanda shared that resources were redirected to meet mandated OTES requirements; thus, affecting resources earmarked for classrooms.
- Wanda added that the new evaluation system negatively affected her teachers.
- Wanda believed the state should slow down the implementation process for the student growth part of the teacher evaluation.
- Wanda emphasized that a high percentage (less than 10%) of the assessed student population opted-out of the PARCC assessments. Wanda inferred the opt-out in her district was because parents believed student scores from the assessments are now used for teacher evaluations.
- Wanda stressed, “Let us evaluate teachers based on the real work; let’s not add that growth piece in for a couple of years.”

Wanda also named College Credit Plus (CCP) as an additional external mandate. She mentioned both positive and negatives regarding this mandate. She believes a gap
exists in “funding” the CCP mandate. Wanda also felt strongly that fiscal impacts of local school districts baring the burden of CCP mandates were not being communicated to stakeholders across Ohio at the state level in a clear, concise manner. Communications of a perceived vision of successful savings for families under the new CCP mandate echoed from the state level through various types of media sources.

- Wanda eloquently shared information she had learned at a meeting. She explained the Governor mentioned that “$50 million a semester is funding high school students across Ohio to have college credit”.
- Wanda also shared that the $50 million per semester is taken from the K-12 school funds and given to colleges and universities.
- Whether a mandate or initiative, Wanda believes communicating and understanding or establishing the why for change is important as well as aligning any change initiative with the vision and goals of the district.
- Wanda asserted that prior mandates had caused positive change within the district; hence, data teams were formed.
- Wanda mentioned having conversations and “setting up [the system]” for goals and “creating rubrics” to measure how the district is progressing.
- Wanda shared that teachers believe with a new name there comes a “new initiative.” She also explained that not communicating an
understanding is why we hear from teachers “Oh, why do we have to
learn this?”

Wanda emphasized the need to understanding *why* a change needs to occur during the
initial introduction of change in order to get “buy-in right from the beginning.”

- Wanda asserted that prior mandates had caused change within the
district. One example given was data teams. These teacher-based-
teams and analyzing data to identify gaps became part of the school
culture.

- Data teams identify gaps, needed improvements (for students,
curriculum, and programs), interventions (successful or unsuccessful)

- Wanda responded that change needs to be tied to the district vision.

*Joe.* During the interview, Joe shared examples of the readiness component of
disconfirmation (gaps) or communicating the *why* of a change. Joe first shared an inter-
disconfirmation or gap in the intent and understanding of the District Report Card. The
District Report Card is a yearly report produced by the state as a way of communicating
to stakeholders the effectiveness of education in each particular school district. Joe also
identified a gap in the understanding of the measurement system used for the District
Report Card to score school districts. Below are some of Joe’s remarks.

- Joe proposed the District Report Card is a moving target, constantly
changing.

- Joe stressed, “There have been 20-27 different components over the
years” all used as different measurements on the District Report Card.
• Joe’s district did quite well on the District Report Card. Joe announced, “If you ask me exactly how this happened [top scoring district on District Report Card] I cannot answer the question.”

• Joe cautioned, “I think we have a flawed measurement process right now….the system needs some adjustments.”

Joe also discussed an additional inter-disconfirmation identified in the state assessments. A gap between the intended use of the assessments at the state level and an understanding of that purpose by groups of stakeholders at the local level exists. Supporting answers from Joe’s interview are found below.

• Joe shared the original purpose of the state for these assessments were to measure student achievement and growth.

• Joe described the historical change over time of various trends of testing in the state of Ohio. Joe emphasized, “that just shows that they just keep moving the target [the expectations] …The state report card has changed over the years of the things they measure”.

• Joe reasoned, “They [parents] reacted, and we started seeing the opt-out issues….I think parents saw that [the assessments] as not measuring how well my student is doing or my child. You’re using this [assessments] for the purpose of this [OTES].” Therefore, the parents began to opt-out their children from taking the test.

**Dr. Karl.** For Dr. Karl, disconfirmation was a focal point throughout the interview. Dr. Karl uses a logic model for gap closure during disconfirmation to establish
and communicate the *why* of change. Dr. Karl uses a logic model when preparing the system for change because it is a logical method rather than an emotional approach. Related data from the interview questions are below.

- Dr. Karl stated, “We [the school district] are a data-based-decision-making school district.” He continued, “We ask the question – Why would we want to change.”

- Dr. Karl explained “Sometimes we [educators] jump straight into implementation” of the change.

- Dr. Karl revealed, “Start with step one and two on the front [in the beginning phase of change].” He continued, “You’re getting your system ready.”

- Dr. Karl explained that step one is to identify the gap and step one “A” (1A) is “after identifying, get the organization ready.”

- Dr. Karl explained, “Gap closure [the logic model] takes emotion out.”

- Dr. Karl maintained, “Start with step one and step two – having conversations.”

- Dr. Karl emphasized, “When there is a change, we start communicating. We talk about where we are and where do we envision ourselves.”

- Dr. Karl explained, “Beta test, revise the initiative, plan, and get the system ready.” Review the feedback and make changes. As long as
the goal is still met, the actual implementation may have transformed
to look differently.

In addition, Dr. Karl spoke about pacing especially during the disconfirmation
phase. He explained the gap between the expectation of pacing externally at the state
level and practicality of implementing change that is at a sustainable pace for a school
district. Dr. Karl also shared his experiences identifying internal organizational gaps
such as pacing in terms of management of programs and people verses the readiness to
move forward through the change process. Dr. Karl discussed this gap as it applies to
change in general during the interview. Some of his statements are found below.

- Dr. Karl believes having longer conversations in the beginning (steps
  one and two) assists in building capacity for successful
  implementation of change.

- Dr. Karl believes the staff must be provided time to analyze the data.
The data can become overwhelming if time is not provided.

- Dr. Karl added, “Implementation happens much easier with less
  resistance and for us, sustainability occurs [when we take the time to
  establish an understanding of why we are making a change].”

- Dr. Karl explained that it feels good to hear employees say “Oh, it’s
  about time, it’s about time, we’ve been talking about this for…” then
  you know you have prepared the system.

- Dr. Karl shared that sometimes he reminded administrators in the
district to slow down the pace of change. He announced to them,
“You’re getting ahead of this [change], this makes all the sense to you, you just came back from a professional development [training] session, you need to get everybody else there [where you are].”

Lastly, Dr. Karl discussed inter-disconfirmation and mandates. Dr. Karl speaks in general terms on how mandates affect the validation process at the district level. Then, he speaks specifically of the District Report Card and OTES. Below Dr. Karl explains.

- Dr. Karl believes with mandates come questions like “Why are we even implementing that change to begin with.” For this reason, Dr. Karl considers mandates to be much more difficult to implement.

- Dr. Karl explains that step one and two are not “ours” when it is a mandate. So, they [process of logic model and getting the system ready] “don’t feel real, don’t feel authentic.”

- Dr. Karl believes that the District Report Card “has completely lost its way, yet there are some amazing points there that can really help inform practice.”

- Dr. Karl shared that use of the growth (student data used for the District Report Card and OTES) can be used to find student gaps early in the year. However, because that data is used for OTES, do we wait, do we not wait to use it?

- Dr. Karl also shared, “[When the State] used and published one year of growth data [teacher value added data]… not a great idea.
Dr. Jeff. Dr. Jeff shared several examples of inter-disconfirmation for mandates as they are perceived in his district. Throughout the interview, Dr. Jeff concentrated many of his responses on the District Report Card and measuring success of students. Some data gaps and disconfirmation processes from Dr. Jeff’s interview are below.

- Dr. Jeff held data meetings. Principals were expected to identify and address student gaps.
- Dr. Jeff shared that “we have those conversations about *why* when looking at data.
- Dr. Jeff spoke of changes in testing approaches. He shared that testing was changed for Students with an IEP (individual Educational Plan). First we didn’t test student with IEPs; then, we started testing students with IEPs. What is communicated at the state level and the information we receive at the local level sometimes differs.
- Dr. Jeff believes a gap exists between the important things we do for kids and the by-product, the report card.

Finding one: Patterns and outliers. Several patterns emerged during the analysis process for finding one; some were inter-disconfirmation of nature (gap between the intended use or effect of the mandate and the actual use, perception or effect of the mandate at the local level). First, all four informers indicated gaps between intended and actual perception and use of the mandate by district stakeholders existed in a number of mandates. Wanda, Joe, and Dr. Karl discussed gaps that hindered the implementation of the Ohio Teachers Evaluation system (OTES). Joe, Dr. Karl and Dr. Jeff discussed gaps
that hindered in the validation of the District Report Card. However, Dr. Karl mentioned some elements of the District Report Card that can enhance the validation of the document as a student-level data tool. The mandated assessments were mentioned by both Wanda and Joe; thus, leading to student opt-outs for state testing. Lastly a gap between the expected pace and the actual pace for implementing as hindering the mandates at the district level were identified by Wanda, Dr. Karl, and Dr. Jeff.

Wanda, Dr. Karl and Dr. Jeff all agreed that understanding and/or communicating the Why for change is necessary to create a climate for change readiness. Wanda, Dr. Karl, and Dr. Jeff also agreed using data-based decisions or data teams to identify gaps is the essential part of disconfirmation or validating a need for change. Joe also inferred to sitting down and going through data and having teams such as BLT and teacher teams to look at scores. There is one outlier of importance to note. Wanda mentioned change should be tied to the district vision.

Finding two: Survival anxiety as a component. Survival anxiety or a sense of urgency is one of the elements needed to creating a climate of change readiness. During the process of creating a sense of urgency either an element of threat or support can be added to increase the level of change readiness. In turn, this should cause a different outcome or response; thus, forming new habits. While analyzing the interview data for survival anxiety, the informers discussed topics such as communication, compliance and mandates, participation, support and concern. All four informers related survival anxiety to recent change efforts in his/her district. Findings from each interview are found below.
**Wanda.** Wanda had experienced survival anxiety in her district. Her staff was data driven and already had teams to develop academic rubrics and analyze results. She also felt as a leader it was important to show support to see results.

- Wanda reported, “The sense of urgency is the feedback we get annually on our state report card….I don’t necessarily have to create the sense of urgency, it’s already there.” The high expectations of the community which are gaged by rating found on the report set the sense of urgency for the district.

- Wanda stated, “We still have that [sense of urgency] in this community which is good. That is an expectation that our report card will be the best in the county.

**Joe.** Joe also discussed experiences with survival anxiety in the district during the change readiness phase. Joe uses the OIP process as a way to communicate, actively participate and to support staff when creating a sense of urgency in his district. Many of the actions taken by Joe create a sense of urgency resulting in lower survival anxiety in his staff. Some examples are found below.

- Joe shared that he works through the District Leadership Team (DLT), Building leadership team (BLT), and the teacher-based-teams (TBT) formed through the Ohio Improvement Process (OIP) to develop solutions from the grassroots level. Joe believes that if you develop a solution this way, the staff is going to believe in it and work harder to make sure it happens.
• Joe also shared that he can count on having good people at all the levels of the OIP – DLT, BLT, and TBT.

• Joe communicated that he felt OIP, at first, had been forced upon the district. However, he said, “When we worked with the teaching staff, I kept my personal opinion to myself. It is a mandate. I don’t sit there and say I don’t believe in this.”

• Joe also shows support for his staff when communicating student achievement to the Board of Education, whether reporting an increase or a decrease. Joe explained, “You try to solve that problem….be honest and fair and let people know what we think is going on and try not to throw anybody under the bus.”

• Joe also shows his support to his administrative staff as he discussed principals recommending changes. He would tell them “give it a shot.”

• Joe’s shared his experience where a mandated change causes a sense of urgency with parents. He explained, “these most recent testing issues with the PARCC….I think it’s the first time it really had an impact on parents where they reacted, and we started seeing the opt-out issues.”

• Joe shared that his teachers were nervous regarding the OTES. He stated, “And then fifty-percent (50%) of it [teacher evaluation] was based on student performance as well. I think everyone was nervous.”
Dr. Karl. Dr. Karl discussed survival anxiety as it applied to communication, compliance with mandates, support for staff, and emotional reactions. Dr. Karl’s discussion points are found below.

- Dr. Karl stated, “We create talking points, common and consistent talking points…that are literally scripted…delivered on the exact same day…they’ve all [district staff] heard the same message.

- Dr. Karl asserted, “We’re trying to explain the need for what the change might look like, feel like, and sound like.”

- Dr. Karl advised, “Being good soldiers and being compliant…we can forget about good procedures and protocols…. [then change] is not sustainable and you can look back and say….we didn’t prepare the system.”

- Dr. Karl shared, “Moral is just beginning to come back this year….our professionals here, just didn’t feel supported from a state and federal level.” He continued to share that as group, the administrative team worked diligently to show the staff support.

- Dr. Karl explained, “They were working really hard, harder than they [the teachers] probably needed to on some of the initiatives that were not theirs, and just wanted some acknowledgement of that.”

- Dr. Karl stated that “staff feeling supported …is able to engage in the change process because the culture [and] climate is right.”
• Dr. Karl cautioned, “Data defines the problem, but it doesn’t help with the human emotional side of why. They’ll listen…When it hits their classroom, now it’s real.”

• Dr. Karl mentioned, “Often leadership creates a sense of urgency – doesn’t feel purposeful to me. It feels emotional, it feels a bit contrived.”

**Dr. Jeff.** Dr. Jeff also spoke about creating a sense of urgency through communication, data meetings and monitoring systems, and showing staff appreciation. Some of Dr. Jeff’s comments from the interview are below.

• Dr. Jeff explained that the staff gains a sense of urgency several different ways. However, he first identified by “talking about their performance.”

• Dr. Jeff also communicates to the staff when it comes to change “either understand that there’s nothing you can do about it. It is about compliance or it has to do with the right thing.”

• Dr. Jeff believes the assessment scores communicated on the District report card bring with it a sense of urgency. He explained how one particular grade level “had displayed a lot of stress” once the scores were received.

• Dr. Jeff reported that peer pressure can also play a part in bringing a sense of urgency to an issue – when one particular building within the district does well and others are not doing as well.
• Dr. Jeff scheduled regular meetings and required principals to attend and report student data and intervention strategies used for each group of students. Dr. Jeff revealed, “We were transforming culture and made it a priority.”

• Dr. Jeff feels urgency is created through a system of monitoring. He stated, “What gets paid attention to, gets done.”

• Dr. Jeff communicated to staff, “If tomorrow we implement this initiative and you believe this too shall pass you better understand we are doing this anyways. You might as well get involved right now because it could happen to you anyways.”

• Dr. Jeff revealed that he showed support to his staff by telling them how he appreciates the results of the assessments and congratulates the staff. He also emphasized offering support early “what else do you need to get this done, what is it as a central office that will support you” instead of just you get it done.

• Dr. Jeff also showed he supported the staff to take risks. Dr. Jeff succinctly described his support by communicating “Go for it” to staff. He added, “You have to give them permission” so they feel supported. He finished with “I never learned anything from doing the right thing and I learned a lot from taking risks.”

Finding two: Patterns and outliers. Patterns also emerged during the analysis process for survival anxiety or building a sense of urgency. First, all four informers
indicated existence of a sense of urgency in his or her district. Joe, Dr. Karl, and Dr. Jeff discussed use of support to lower anxiety; thus, moving the staff towards commitment to the change. These three superintendents (Joe, Dr. Karl and Dr. Jeff) also discussed using communication during the specific phase of change readiness – creating a sense of urgency. Both Wanda and Jeff felt the feedback from the District Report Card created a sense of urgency in their respective district. In addition, both these superintendents (Wanda and Dr. Jeff) believe pressure is applied to one another due to the achievement scores found on the District Report Card; thus, causing a sense of urgency. Two superintendents address emotions (Joe and Dr. Karl).

There are two outliers of importance to note. Dr. Karl implied urgency is established by creating a vision. Also, during a mandated change, Joe mentioned although he may not necessarily believe in a mandate, he does not tell his staff he does not support the change.

**Finding three: Psychological safety as a component.** Psychological safety is about the staff perceiving themselves as safe and able to take risks without retaliation. This is the last element for creating the culture for change readiness. There are eight conditions needed for staff to feel safe to take risks in the workplace and lower learning anxiety (vision, formal training, staff involvement in training, informal training in teams, support for the change, positive role model, support groups, systems and supports aligned with the vision). Data from the interviews are below.

*Wanda.* During the interview, Wanda shared several examples of cultivating a workplace where staff can feel free to take risks. Wanda discussed seven of the eight
conditions important to creating psychological safety for staff. Wanda’s details on the seven conditions during her interview are below.

Vision. Vision is one of the eight conditions of psychological safety.

- Wanda explained that although the vision is collaboratively set with the DLT, she must communicate that vision to both the staff and the Board of Education.

- Wanda emphasized, “Making sure that the staff really understands [the vision] that’s my role.”

- Wanda also feels change cannot be random; it should be tied to the vision. We can’t just “hop on the bandwagon…just because it sounds good.”

Formal training. Formal Training is one of the eight conditions of psychological safety.

- Wanda explained that one of the hardest mandates to implement was the Common Core Standards or Ohio’s Learning Standards. Wanda stated, “We used experts that were recommended to us…I know this person and she’s really good at unpacking the standards.”

- Wanda revealed, “Teachers were asked to learn many things. We just barely got through [the first year in our new buildings].”

Involvement of the learner in training. Involvement of the learner in training is one of the eight conditions of psychological safety.
• Wanda described the collaborative process of working through the implementation of OTES. For this mandate, teachers and administrators worked together to plan and train the district on the process and specific details of the evaluation system.

• Wanda shared a modification made recently to training or professional development. Extra down time, or a pause, was added to give the staff a period of unstructured time when each can practice the skills learned during the training using a method of their choice.

• Wanda emphasized during the interview that some of her teachers decided to vertically align their standards during the added down time, or pause phase, during the Ohio Revised Standards training.

*Informal training of teams.* Informal training of teams is one of the eight conditions of psychological safety.

• Wanda revealed that her administrative team had just finished a book study.

• Wanda discussed holding informal testing/informational meeting with staff. Guidance counselors prepared updated testing information and invited staff to attend meetings to gain an understanding of those updates.

• Wanda shared that in her district data teams gathered to analyze student data and to share suggestions and experiences on interventions that may or may not have worked in the classroom.
**Practice, resources and feedback.** One of the eight conditions of psychological safety includes practice, resources and feedback.

- Wanda feels changes come back to timing; “the implementation of mandates is too quick.”
- She announced, “We’ve done more early release days.” She feels an early release day enables the staff the time needed.
- Wanda described the pause, or the time between trainings, as the phase in which feedback is exchanged.
- Wanda believes it is the administrator’s responsibility to determine how staff would like to receive feedback. However, she expects consistency to exist when giving feedback to staff.
- Wanda believes proving support or feedback is huge. However, she also noted that it was sometimes difficult because she is located in a separate building.

**Support groups.** Support groups are additional conditions of psychological safety.

- Wanda’s district has implemented the Ohio Improvement Process and formed the DLT, BLTs, and TBTs. These teams meet to analyze and monitor data, and share experiences as well as suggestions for situations.

**Systems and structures.** Systems and structures are one of the eight conditions of psychological safety.
• The pause phase was added to the training, or professional development, structure to give “them [staff] time, then, to absorb what it is you’re asking them to do and get that feedback, then, do a little bit more training.”

Joe. Joe also shared examples of conditions for creating psychological safety at the workplace. Joe discussed five of the eight conditions important to creating psychological safety for staff. Joe’s details on the five conditions are below.

**Formal training.** Formal training is one of the eight conditions of psychological safety.

• Joe shared that at his district professional development, or training, was encouraged. We especially encourage seeking professional development outside the district. In addition, the district has funds, Title IIA – federal funding, for this purpose.

• Joe advised, “If you are going to have change they [staff] need to hear it from experts and not just from local – you know, building principals, superintendent or whatever. You [teachers] need to hear that from someone outside.”

• Joe also shared that his administrative team found it difficult to deliver an expert’s message to their staff. But to have them hear that from the expert is more important.

**Informal training of teams.** Informal training of teams is also one of the eight conditions of psychological safety.
• Joe mentioned that it is hard to get all the staff together at once; however, it is important.

• Joe emphasized that professional learning communities were developed in the elementary and we try to get common planning periods.

• Joe focuses on the team and group dynamics ensuring none of the participants dominate and all participate.

• Joe bargained an extra contracted day for non-teaching personnel so all staff in the district could meet twice each year.

Positive role models. Positive role models also serve as a condition of psychological safety.

• Joe explained that it was his job to project a “positive image of whatever is occurring.”

• Joe shared that he was not pleased about the mandated implementation of the OIP in his district and was not fond of the process. However, he added, “I don’t sit there and say I don’t believe in this [the mandated OIP].”

• Joe stated, “We do whatever it takes to meet the mandate.”

• Joe described his reaction if the district has a review and fails to meet a standard. He said, “My attitude is always if we’re not doing something correctly, then as a group and a team we’re going to come back and address that and do it correctly.”
• Joe announced that “I never get excited when they [teachers] get accused of shortcomings.” He continued with “we’re going to work harder to meet it next year.”

Support groups. Support groups also serve as a condition of psychological safety.

• Joe tries to assume a different role in the groups other than the leader. He strives to accomplish the task as a team.

• Joe uses the OIP to include the DLT and TBTs. Groups of teachers meet to discuss “how are we to get this accomplished” developing solutions to problems and situations from the teacher level.

• Joe explained when a BLT meets the group may discuss a common approach to improve a grade level or a subject area.

Systems and structures. Systems and structures are an additional element of psychological safety.

• Joe felt due to “the way schools are structured” that communication is difficult. Scheduling makes collaboration difficult.

• Joe shared “We’re [educators] so alone at times. They [teachers] have class, then, they [teachers] go home and there’s no other interaction with other staff members. I said we [educators] just started education in one room school houses and I said, we’re almost like we’re a series of one room school houses.”
Dr. Karl. Dr. Karl also shared examples of conditions in four of the eight conditions important to creating psychological safety for staff. Below are details from the interview for those four conditions.

Vision. Vision is one of the eight conditions of psychological safety.

- Dr. Karl shared that in his district it is important to discuss “where do we envision ourselves going” and “what change looks like.”

Practice, resources and feedback. An additional condition of psychological safety includes practice, resources, and feedback.

- Dr. Karl believes it is important to find time for your teachers to collaborate.

- Dr. Karl emphasized, “If you don’t provide time for it [teacher collaboration], it [expectations of teaching today] can feel very overwhelming.”

- Dr. Karl stated that the DLT-BLT-TBT works as a system to collect feedback to make adjustments to communicate an understanding for initiatives.

Positive role models. Positive role models serve as an additional condition of psychological safety.

- Dr. Karl has prepared his district for several different changes. When sharing thoughts on implementing mandates in his district, Dr. Karl replied, “If they are not our initiatives, I’ll work real hard to implement them, again, with great fidelity and integrity.”
Dr. Karl gets involved and begins to model the process when preparing for change.

Dr. Karl wears many hats during the change process; his many different roles have been facilitator, coach, listener, and evaluator.

Dr. Karl shared that he sometimes needs to slow the process down to grasp a better understanding of a concept or process.

**Support groups.** Also included in the eight conditions of psychological safety are support groups.

Dr. Karl uses the Ohio Improvement Process in his districts. The DLT, BLT, and TBTs are groups of teachers meeting together to solve problems.

**Dr. Jeff.** Dr. Jeff shared several examples of cultivating a workplace where staff can feel free to take risks. Dr. Jeff discussed four of the eight conditions important to creating psychological safety for staff. Data collected from the interview regarding those four conditions are below.

**Vision.** Vision is one of the eight conditions of psychological safety.

- Dr. Jeff stated the vision for all staff “everyone has success.”
- Dr. Jeff met with the administrative team to define and expand upon the vision. Jeff believes we, as educators, are obligated to ensure kids receive “specific elements of learning.” He shared with his team questions such as “what are we doing for each group of kids” and “How can you show me they are getting better.”
“Dr. Jeff’s district shifted a focus to subgroups. He explained, “We believe in very simply ALL scores.”

Dr. Jeff stated, “We built the model and make sure…we live by it.”

Dr. Jeff described his process of leading a group. He said, “Understand we’re going to do this [agree on a building plan]. Your task is to come up with a plan that we can stick together on that will help us financially because we want to do what is best for kids.” Dr. Jeff shared that he went prepared to share a few plans; however, left with a completely new plan.

Dr. Jeff shares implementation details with staff member when needed. He explains, “If tomorrow we implement this initiative and you believe this too shall pass you better understand we are doing this anyways. You might as well get involved right now because it could happen to you anyways.”

Practice, resources and feedback. Elements such as practice, resources, and feedback are also included as one of the eight conditions of psychological safety.

Dr. Jeff provides resources needed to ensure success. He asks questions such as “what else do you need to get this done” or “what is it as a central office that will support you instead of just – get it done.”

Dr. Jeff believes when you have success that you pass that success on to your teachers, giving the teachers feedback.
• Dr. Jeff described a time when feedback was not so positive; he “held their [teacher’s] feet to the fire.”

• Dr. Jeff shows appreciation to his teachers for the student achievement results and congratulates them on the hard work.

*Positive role models.* Positive role models also serve as one of the eight conditions of psychological safety.

• Dr. Jeff said, “We are the best example.” He continued to explain that we can validate mandates (i.e. Third Grade Reading Guarantee – TGRG). Dr. Jeff reminded his administrators to explain the value in compliance. For example, it’s good for every student to try multiple times to pass the reading test in the third grade.

• Dr. Jeff also felt strongly that his district should not be divided between “the have and have-nots.” He felt the students need to be mixed together early because “we got to stop thinking it’s because we got special sauce and something special is happening” is the reason a gap exists between the academic achievement scores in buildings within the district.

*Systems and structures.* An additional component of psychological safety includes systems and structures.

• Dr. Jeff restructured the buildings under the new building project to provide grade level buildings to equate a more socially just education for all students across the district.
Dr. Jeff felt the TGRG was a summative assessment of all the hard work of K-3. He used a restructuring project to change the culture of staff within a building to a K-3 collaborative mindset.

**Finding three: Patterns and outliers.** Finding three contained eight different components. Patterns also emerged for Finding Three during the analysis process in five of the eight components for creating psychological safety at the workplace. Three superintendents, Wanda, Dr. Karl, and Dr. Jeff, discussed vision as well as the component of Resources/Feedback/Coaching as part of creating psychological safety for staff. A positive role model was an additional pattern discussed by superintendents that emerged in the data. The three superintendents, Joe, Dr. Karl, and Dr. Jeff, felt this component also contributed to creating an environment where staffs feel safe to take risks. Wanda, Joe, and Dr. Karl communicated that support groups were important when creating a safe environment to take risks. Lastly, Wanda, Joe, and Dr. Jeff addressed the component of systems and structures and both relate to his or her district and preparing for change readiness. This data is also displayed in Table 1 below.
Table 1

*Components of Psychological Safety*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Wanda</th>
<th>Joe</th>
<th>Dr. Karl</th>
<th>Dr. Jeff</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Formal Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>Involve Learner in Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>Informal Training for Teams</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coaches, Resources, Feedback</td>
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<td>Role Model</td>
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<td>Support Groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Systems and Structures</td>
<td>X</td>
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</table>

*Notes.* Eight Components of Psychological Safety. Informers = Wanda, Joe, Dr. Karl, Dr. Jeff. X = Addressed component during interview.

**Research Question Two and Three: Findings.**

Research Question Two: What strategies do superintendents in Ohio school districts identify as supporting the process of creating organizational change readiness?

Research Question Three: How are these strategies used to create organizational change readiness? Each informer, or superintendent, identified strategies supporting the process of creating change readiness and discussed how those strategies were used in his or her district. Findings obtained from interviews conducted with the four informers are discussed in this chapter. Each superintendent discussed his or her experience with the
three strategies (persuasive communication, active participation and management of external sources) by responding to questions during an interview (see Appendix B). Themes and patterns are summarized in the chapter.

**Finding four: Persuasive communication as a strategy.** Persuasive Communication is one of the strategies that can be used by superintendents. The data below are examples of communication used by the superintendent to convey either discrepancy, which is a gap, or efficacy, the ability to reach accomplishments. All four superintendents discussed using this strategy. Discussion points are found below.

**Wanda.** Wanda discussed conveying discrepancy and efficacy during her interview using persuasive communication. She uses a section of her weekly newsletter, called the common grounds, to inform the district staff of changes at the state level. Wanda also used the weekly newsletter to celebrate staff members.

- Wanda stated, “If I see something happening at the State Board of Education…. [I] would capture that for my newsletter….kind of a way to introduce it.”
- Wanda described, “Really, the common grounds is just something that’s happening in the political arena that affects all of us.”
- Wanda emphasized that the weekly newsletter contained a section on getting to know a staff member or to “honor people who take initiative to step up and do something positive for the district. Staff members that took something upon themselves to create a positive impact on the district.”
Joe. Joe also used persuasive communication when addressing a discrepancy. He specifically used it on an occasion when speaking to his administrative staff regarding attendance at events. His comment from the interview can be viewed below.

- When addressing attendance at an event, Joe explained, “It’s not about coverage, it’s about caring.

Dr. Karl. Dr. Karl uses staff to deliver persuasive communication once a discrepancy or gap has been found and the *why* has been established in his district. Data for use of this strategy by Dr. Karl is below.

- Dr. Karl uses vertical communication and the DLT, BLT, and TBTs formed through the Ohio Improvement process which consists of staff representing all different segments of the district.
- Dr. Karl explained, “We create talking points, common and consistent talking point…literally scripted…delivered on the exact same day, exact same timeframe.”

Dr. Jeff. Dr. Jeff also uses persuasive communication to communicate discrepancies to his Board of Education. This type of communication assists the members to envision gaps between two versions – a present version and an ideal version.

- Dr. Jeff explained during the interview that he speaks in length with the Board of education regarding “*why* something needs to happen”. This assists the members to see why a change is necessary.
Dr. Jeff reported that he switched from emphasizing the report card to “explain[ing] what our kids accomplish. That’s why we do what we do. My Board of Education likes that.”

Finding four: Patterns and outliers. Patterns for this strategy were found mostly in one of the two parts, discrepancy. First all four informers identified persuasive communication as a supporting strategy used in his or her district to prepare the district for change. In addition, all four superintendents, Wanda, Joe, Dr. Karl and Dr. Jeff, used the strategy of persuasive communication to convey discrepancy. Newsletters, meetings (face-to-face), staff, were used to communicate the persuasive message.

There is outlier of importance to note. Wanda used the persuasive message strategy for the purpose of efficacy. She highlighted staff in the weekly newsletter; thus, supporting and encouraging innovation.

Finding five: Active participation as a strategy. Active participation is one of the strategies that can be used by superintendents as a change readiness strategy. Four superintendents discussed active participation as a supporting strategy used to prepare his or her district for change. Findings from each of the four interviews are found below.

Wanda. Wanda discussed her experience with active participation within her district. She discussed active participation as it related to mandates, groups and specific key players, gaining buy-in for the initiative, and creating a sense of ownership. Details from Wanda’s interview are found below.

- Wanda felt if the initiative is a mandate, such as OTES, a committee could be formed. She continued, “We actually created language that
said we would roll that [OTES] out together, and so it would be a shared implementation.” Wanda shared that it was the job of the committee to both present and train the district on the new evaluation system.

- Wanda discussed the importance of deciding the “model of shared leadership to use when rolling out the new initiative.” She emphasized that any superintendent that announced in front of a group, “Okay, we’re going to do this. It is going to be questioned.” Her recommendation was to gather a couple of “key people (i.e., union leadership, department heads, and principals) and talk about how to move forward.”

- Wanda recommends a team approach. She shared that she says to people “Hey, I am going to do this why don’t you come with me.” That is planting a seed.

- Wanda believes delegating and then allowing that person to have control can also spur active participation.

- Wanda spoke about the mandated assessments. A few of her staff members served on the AIR consulting team. Those staff members serving on the consulting team returned to the district with a positive attitude about the test.
• Wanda feels success is the initial introduction and “get some people that have that buy-in right at the beginning and understand why we’re going down that path.”
• Wanda also feels creating the rubric for academic goals assists with gaining a sense of ownership of the goals.
• Wanda also feels a sense of ownership for data and student achievement is created when teacher-based-teams sit together and discuss data, interventions, and strategies.

Joe. Joe discussed the change readiness strategy, active participation. He uses active participation as a strategy to support district change for mandates, power sharing, and creating a sense of ownership. Data below includes details from Joe’s interview.

• Joe addressed the OTES mandate by forming a committee and addressing changes through a committee rather than an official memorandum of understandings (MOUs).
• Joe shared that teacher-based-teams meet monthly to address any problems areas.
• Joe suggests communicating with teachers. Say, “we have to do this” and request input on how to accomplish the task
• Joe shared a story about “there is no rank”. In this military debriefing if something needed corrected anyone could speak up. Joe continued, “I think you have to be willing to listen to what others have to say.”
Joe emphasized, “It’s important to go ask them what they think, and even if you don’t like what they think, you work together.”

Joe shared, “You have to allow teachers to have input and allow them to believe…they really created the program or the solution.”

**Dr. Karl.** Dr. Karl uses active participation as a strategy in his district through the OIP framework. Dr. Karl believes the DLT, BLT, and TBTs in a district combine to form a framework to prepare for success change. He uses this strategy to establish disconfirmation or the *why* for change. Below are comments from Dr. Karl’s interview.

- Dr. Karl shared, “Attendance on our district leadership team is invite, to make sure we have the right representation across the district.”
- Dr. Karl shared that his school improvement model was the five-step process through the DLT, BLT, and TBT.
- Dr. Karl described the communication is reinforced at the TBT level, then the BLT evaluates “what do they hear, what’s working, what’s not working” back up to the DLT.
- Dr. Karl stated, “If you can’t convince that group, how are you going to ask the DLT to go down to the BLT now and sell it.”

**Dr. Jeff.** Dr. Jeff used active participation as a strategy in the district through input from others, and shared ownership. Below are details regarding active participation in Dr. Jeff’s district.

- Dr. Jeff described his strategy for forming a group to actively participate in decisions. Dr. Jeff explained, “It is a combination of the
people who I realize might come – my principals, curriculum director.” He continued by adding people “good at directing groups.”

- Dr. Jeff explained that key staff members consisted of people who “had their hearts in the right place.”

- Dr. Jeff also tries to pick people who have opinions that differ from his own opinion. Dr. Jeff emphasized, I didn’t just pick the people that agreed with us….if I did, they would come to us and say you didn’t hear our ideas.”

- Dr. Jeff announced, “I want people to tell me what they think. I want to hear, I want to observe more.”

- Dr. Jeff sent out a survey to stakeholders. He was asking for input on various topics. With the returned surveys, he was able to make better decisions. Dr. Jeff shared that at least one of the assumptions of the district was wrong. He believes input is important and a survey is a good instrument to collect that data.

- Dr. Jeff shared an experience he remembered regarding his building committee. He arrived at the building committee meeting and gave the members instructions to “come up with a plan.” He also gave them financial and “do what is best for kids” guidelines. He arrived with a few plans and left that same day with one new plan.

**Finding five: Patterns and outliers.** Patterns for this strategy, active participation, were found during analysis. First all four informers identified active
participation as a supporting strategy to prepare a district for change. All four informers, Wanda, Joe, Dr. Karl and Dr. Jeff, formed either teams or committees to encourage active participation and gain input from participant. Two of those superintendents, Wanda and Dr. Jeff, used active participation to gain input from key players. In addition, three superintendents, Wanda, Joe and Dr. Jeff, used the strategy of active participation to create a sense of ownership; in each instance, something was created (i.e., rubric, program, or plan).

**Finding six: Pacing as a strategy.** Pacing is one strategy superintendents feel supports change readiness. All four superintendents discussed this strategy during his or her interview. One superintendent used this strategy to assist in preparing for change. Findings from the two interviews are found below.

**Wanda.** Wanda used the pacing strategy in her district as a new professional development structure.

- Wanda shared that “adding a pause” in the structure of the professional development gives the teachers time to gain a better understanding of the new skill or material learned.
- Wanda explained that “adding the pause” in the structure between training allows for feedback.

**Joe.** Joe used the strategy of pacing in his district. He believes pacing, when used correctly, can be used to support change readiness. Below are supporting interview data gathered.
• Joe advised, “I say we’re nomads…I don’t think the new superintendent should go in and think there’s an urgency that things have to be changed overnight.” He also emphasized the importance of understanding the journeys a district has previously taken.
• Joe believes that results from changes take time – possibly up to three years.
• Joe stated that legislature were sending expectations down to local districts too quickly.

**Dr. Karl.** Dr. Karl uses the strategy of pacing to support change in his district. He shares how pacing has affected his district in regards to change. Data from Dr. Karl’s interview is below.

• Dr. Karl explains that the beginning of the process, “getting the system ready” is where it takes time. It’s about time. Dr. Karl shares that it takes time to build and grow capacity; but, “the implementation happens much easier, with much less resistance and…sustainability occurs.”
• Dr. Karl, as superintendent, reminds administrators “You’re getting ahead of this, this makes all the sense to you, you just came back from a professional development session, [and] you need to get everybody else there. So, what got you there and what have you done to get your people there?”
• Dr. Karl shared, “This has probably been the best year we’ve had in the last five years ‘cause we’re not dealing with a lot of mandates.”
Dr. Jeff. Dr. Jeff also discussed pacing as it relates to change. He regards pacing as an important strategy to support preparing the district for change. Details from the interview regarding change and the strategy of pacing are below.

- Dr. Jeff explained, “Remember that there is nothing wrong with being patient and doing it right.”
- Dr. Jeff emphasized, “Always be willing to do it small and do it right instead of going all out.”
- Dr. Jeff explained that sometimes you get one chance at a change initiative. You don’t want to “leave a bad taste in their mouth”. Make sure you take your time and do it right. Ensure it’s a good experience.

Finding six: Patterns and outliers. The strategy of pacing was analyzing as it applies to change readiness. First, all four informers identified pacing as supporting his or her district in preparing for change. Three informers, Wanda, Dr. Karl and Dr. Jeff, used pacing during the change process for improvement of the implementation of a mandate, initiative or training. All superintendents, however, used the pacing strategy in ways unique to their own style.

One outlier of importance exists. Joe mentioned using pacing as a strategy, specifically for a new superintendent, to reflect on a past practices that assisted the district in evolving to its current position.

Finding seven: Supporting staff as a strategy. Showing support is regarded by superintendents as important to their staff. Support for staff is one strategy used by superintendents to support change readiness efforts in a district. All four superintendents
discussed the strategy, supporting staff during their interview. However, supporting staff was used as a strategy for change readiness by three superintendents. Findings from the three interviews are found below.

**Wanda.** Wanda used the strategy, supporting staff, to assist in preparing for change in her district. She regards it as a supporting strategy for change readiness. Evidence gathered from Wanda’s interview is below.

- Wanda explained that her staff, at times, wants to “try something new.” We support the staff putting time and effort into an innovative idea. Wanda added, “Hopefully it’s successful for him and his students, but if it’s not, we’re not going to say – Oh you shouldn’t have done that.”

**Dr. Karl.** Dr. Karl also used support for the staff as a strategy to assist in preparing for change at the district level. Data gather from Dr. Karl’s interview regarding supporting staff in regard to change is below.

- Dr. Karl understands the importance of supporting teachers during times of transition (i.e., retirement); at the same time, continue with the forward momentum of the initiative. He considers how to support that teacher without “moving his or her cheese”.

- Dr. Karl considers “thinking about that [transitioning staff] respectfully…saves you a lot of resistance later.”

**Dr. Jeff.** Jeff used support for staff as a strategy in his district to assist in creating change readiness. Data gathered from Dr. Jeff’s interview is below.
• Jeff asks teachers what central office can do that will support them in getting the job done.

• Jeff emphasized that he tells teachers “you’ve got it [my permission]” adding “support them [the teachers].

**Finding seven: Patterns and outliers.** Patterns were found for the strategy supporting staff during data analysis. Three informers identified supporting staff as a strategy he or she used when preparing the district for change. This strategy gave support by “giving permission” to the staff regarding change. Two of the superintendents mentioned using this strategy to encourage innovation; thus, giving staff permission to try new ideas. One superintendent mentioned using the strategy to allow teachers to remain “stabilized” during a transitional time such as retirement as the district moves forward with the change. There were no outliers of importance noted.

**Finding eight: Discrepancy as a strategy.** Discrepancy, disconfirmation, or the need for validation, is a process of identifying a gap between the current state of an organization and desired goals of the organization. Disconfirming is many times thought of as establishing “why”. The need to establish the “why” is also thought of as the reason for, purpose of, or a validation process; consequently, the need to establish validation is disconfirmation.

This strategy of finding a discrepancy, or disconfirmation, can be intra-disconfirmation – or happen within the company, as well as inter-disconfirmation – happen outside between two organizations (i.e., state and local educational organizations). The strategy of establishing a gap between the perceived version or use
and the desired version or use of an initiative or mandate would be an inter-disconfirming strategy.

All informers experienced disconfirming information or identification of gaps in current situations and intended purposes, goals or visions within their districts or in the establishment of why for a mandate or initiative at the district level. The data collected and analyzed during the study revealed Wanda, Joe, Dr. Karl and Dr. Jeff explicitly or implicitly discussed disconfirmation or the need to establish why as a strategy of readiness for change at his or her school district. Patterns for this theme emerged during the analysis of data during the study. However, during the interviews each superintendent communicated their own unique perspective and examples of the disconfirming strategy. Data from each interview are found below.

**Wanda.** During the interview, Wanda discussed the readiness strategy of discrepancy, finding gaps or communicating the why of a change as it related to her district. The examples are found below.

- Whether a mandate or initiative, Wanda considers communicating an understanding or establishing the why for change as a supporting strategy to prepare a district for change.
- Wanda shared that data teams completed important work which is to analyze student data. The buildings then set goals to close the gaps found in the data. She continued by adding that mandates had caused positive change within the district; hence, data teams were formed from one of the mandates.
• Wanda mentioned having conversations and “setting up [the system]” for goals and “creating rubrics” to measure how the district is doing.

• Wanda emphasized the need for an understanding of why to occur during the initial introduction of change in order to get “buy-in right from the beginning.”

• Wanda asserted that prior mandates had caused change within the district. One example given was data teams.

• Data teams identify gaps, needed improvements (for students, curriculum, and programs), interventions (successful or unsuccessful)

• Wanda responded that change needs to be tied to the district vision.

Joe. During the interview, Joe discussed discrepancy and finding gaps in relationship to change in his district. Joe’s discusses discrepancy and how the gap related to change in his district. Below are some of Joe’s discussion points from the interview.

• Joe maintains that bringing the entire staff together is important; but, the opportunities for this type of gathering are limited. Therefore, “I even negotiated an extra day in the non-teaching personnel contract that they get paid.” That enables all staff extra meeting time.

• Joe considers teacher-based-teams vital to improving student achievement. Joe considers his teams to be strength in his district. If a problem emerges, his teacher-teams sit down and analyze the data using a “common approach” to solving the problem.
**Dr. Karl.** For Dr. Karl, disconfirmation was a focal point throughout the interview. Dr. Karl uses a logic model to identify gap closure during disconfirmation to establish and communicate the “why” of change. Dr. Karl uses a logic model when preparing the system for change because it is based on logic rather than emotion. Related data from the interview questions are below.

- Dr. Karl stated, “We [the school district] are a data-based-decision-making school district.” He continued, “We ask the question – Why would we want to change.”
- Dr. Karl explained “Sometimes we [educators] jump straight into implementation” of the change.
- Dr. Karl revealed, “Start with step one and two on the front [in the beginning phase of change].” He continued, “You’re getting your system ready.”
- Dr. Karl explained that step one is to identify the gap and step one “A” is “after identifying, get the organization ready.”
- Dr. Karl explained, “Gap closure [the logic model] takes emotion out.”
- Dr. Karl maintained, “Start with step one and step two – having conversations.”
- Dr. Karl emphasized, “When there is a change, we start communicating. We talk about where we are and where do we envision ourselves.”
• Dr. Karl explained, “Beta test, revise the initiative, plan, and get the system ready.” Review the feedback and make changes. As long as the goal is still met, the actual implementation may have transformed to look differently.

In addition, Dr. Karl spoke about pacing especially during the disconfirmation phase. He explained the gap between the expectation of pacing externally at the state level and practicality of implementing change at a pace that is sustainable at the district level. Dr. Karl also shared his experiences with identifying gaps in reference to internal pacing as well as the management of programs and people in reference to the level of readiness for staff to move through the change process. Dr. Jeff discussed this gap as it applies to change in general during the interview. Some of his statements are found below.

• Dr. Karl added, “Implementation happens much easier with less resistance and for us, sustainability occurs [when we take the time to establish an understanding of why we are making a change].”

• Dr. Karl explained that it feels good to hear employees say “Oh, it’s about time, it’s about time, we’ve been talking about this for…” then you know you have prepared the system.

• Dr. Karl shared that sometimes he would remind administrators within the district to slow down the pace of change. He would announce to them, “You’re getting ahead of this [change], this makes all the sense
to you, you just came back from a professional development [training] session, you need to get everybody else there [where you are].”

Dr. Karl discussed using the discrepancy strategy to prepare the district for change. He used the District Report Card data points as well as Value-Added data to validate discrepancies; thus, identifying gaps between district goals and district performance. Below are Dr. Karl’s discussion points from the interview.

- Dr. Karl believes that the District Report Cart “has completely lost its way, yet there are some amazing points there that can really help inform practice.”

- Dr. Karl shared that growth data (student data used for the District Report Card and OTES) can be used to find student gaps early in the year.

- Dr. Karl regards finding the gap in data and understanding the why of the initiative important. His DLT, BLT, and TBT are teams used for this work.

**Dr. Jeff.** Dr. Jeff discussed that in his district information from data meetings and conversations regarding why is shared with the Board of Education. This is an inter-disconfirmation in perceived in his district as communicated to the Board of Education. Throughout the interview, Dr. Jeff concentrated many of his responses on the District Report Card and measuring success of students. Some data gaps and disconfirmation processes from Dr. Jeff’s interview is below.
Dr. Jeff held data meetings. Principals were expected to identify and address student gaps.

Dr. Jeff shared that “we have those conversations about why when looking at data.

Dr. Jeff believes a gap between the important things we do for kids and the by-product, the report card exists. He began communicating student accomplishments and focusing on “what we [the district] do for kids”; thus, communicating what matters more to the Board of Education.

**Finding eight: Patterns and outliers.** Several patterns emerged during the analysis process for discrepancy as a supporting strategy. First, all four informers, Wanda, Joe, Dr. Karl and Dr. Jeff, indicated one or more teams gather and confer about data in the district. Three districts, Wanda, Joe, and Dr. Jeff, specifically addressed gathering or having other conversations. Two of those districts, Wanda and Dr. Jeff, have discussions to establish the why. There are two outlier of importance to note. Wanda mentioned change should be tied to the district vision. Dr. Karl spoke of student growth data points.

**Research Question Four and Five: Findings**

Research Question Four: What strategies do superintendents in Ohio school districts identify as hindering the process of creating organizational change readiness?

Research Question Five: How are these strategies used during the process? Hindering
strategies emerged and were identified while analyzing the data gathered from the interviews and field notes.

Patterns of strategies hindering readiness for change emerged from the interviews of all four informers. Each superintendent discussed experiences with hindrances when preparing his or her district for change. The findings obtained from the interviews conducted with each informer are discussed in this chapter. Themes and patterns are organized and summarized below.

**Finding nine: Principal support as a hindrance.** Patterns emerged for the strategy of Principal Support as a hindrance when preparing a district for change in a number of districts. Principal support is one strategy a superintendent could use to support a change initiative or mandate in a school district. In other words, positive energy can assist in avoiding resistance to change in an organization. The strategy emerged as a hindrance to change efforts during the analysis process because if negative energy is present toward an initiative rather than positive support, principal support (or creating positive attitudes) is hindered during the readiness efforts.

All informers indirectly discussed this strategy; thus, the effects can be a hindrance on efforts for change. With this said, the four superintendents were chosen for their ability to make change in their district and in education across the state. Therefore, as one superintendent said “Hindrance is a harsh word”. The study revealed several patterns emerged in this area that hindered change at his or her school district. Patterns for this theme emerged at the conclusion of the study. Findings from each interview are found below.
Wanda. During the interview, Wanda shared several examples of principal support as a hindrance related to creating readiness for change in her district. She discussed a number of hindrances for principal support in reference to stakeholders; thus, possibly causing resistance to change. Also, Wanda identified belief that change is not necessary; change is not feasible, fear of personal failure as possible reasons this strategy hinders creating change. Data from the interview are stated below.

Belief that change is not necessary. The belief that change is not necessary manifested as a hindrance to preparing a school district for change.

- Wanda reflected on adapting new curriculum and stated that “the teachers leaving really didn’t want anything to do with new curriculum.”
- Wanda shared that teachers have a difficult time seeing “the big picture.” Educators see each initiative as separate rather than connected (i.e., RTI and PBIS) that is why you might hear “oh, here we go again, we’re doing something different.”
- Wanda shared that a high percentage (less than 10%) of parents opted their children out of the PARCC assessments.
- Wanda explained that moving to the new standards and assessments was difficult. Training was interrupted due to different trainers conducting the series of sessions. Teachers felt like “oh now we’re starting again with something else.”
• Wanda shared, “It really isn’t a new initiative, but has a new name.” She shared that anytime you assign something a new name, teachers we question it as a new initiative. You will hear, “Oh, why do we have to do that?”

*Change is not feasible.* The belief that change is not feasible manifested as a hindrance to preparing a school district for change.

• Wanda emphasized, “It’s not that those [mandates] are bad changes, but in the timing that we’re usually asked to implement, the implementation is pretty quick without the testing of the information that we’re given, or the tools that we’re given.

• Wanda, when asked, explained to local representatives and legislators to “slow down the implementation of OTES. The part about the student growth measure….The implementation of the mandates is just too quick. For our staff it affected morale.”

• Wanda announced, “It’s been for us here, it’s been a roller coaster. It has really affected them [the teachers] negatively.” She continued to name mandates the district has implemented during the past five years (i.e., Common Core Curriculum, PARCC assessments, OTES, Principal Evaluations).

*Fear of personal failure.* Fear of personal failure emerged as a hindrance to preparing a school district for change.
• Wanda understands it is important for staff to feel safe to “step out of the box”. Wanda also feels the district leadership team needs to prepare and nurture this type of climate. She added that it doesn’t come up a lot, but you’ll hear “well, I’m afraid to do this because this might happen.”

Joe. Joe gave examples of multiple reasons the strategy of principal support might hinder readiness for change in a school district. He discussed experiences he had with stakeholders in this district. Joe identified trust, belief that change is not necessary; and that change is not feasible as possible reasons this strategy hinders creating change readiness. Data from the interview are stated below.

Trust. Trust manifested as a hindrance to preparing a school district for change.

• Joe explained that the assessments have been changed numerous times throughout the years. Joe commented, “They just keep moving the target.”

• Joe mentioned that a new complaint has surfaced about the assessments. Joe shared, “they claim that the paper and pencil questions were easier, which I don’t know how anyone knows, because I didn’t see any of those questions, I don’t think anyone else was supposed to.” He add that his district received better scores than other bigger districts (paper/pencil) that in the past had done well.

• Joe reported, “I think there needs to be another look at how we measure how well schools are doing…I should be sitting there going –
this is great [because my school did well]…. I still think the system needs some adjustments.

- Joe announced, “I know some of those districts I mentioned before…have some programs we don’t even offer….They didn’t take a giant nosedive this year to get three or four “F’s”…..not that we deserve “F’s” either, it’s that I think we have a flawed measurement process right now.”

**Belief that change is not necessary.** The belief that change is not necessary emerged as a hindrance to preparing a school district for change.

- Joe explained that at first he felt the Ohio Improvement Process was being forced upon his district. Joe continued, “We weren’t one of those districts; we weren’t having problems with student achievement.”

- Joe maintains that there is also a misunderstanding regarding legislature getting involved in placing policy in negotiated agreements. He continued “How do you place something in there [negotiated or collective bargaining agreement] that you don’t bargain?”

**Change is not feasible.** Change is not feasible was seen as a hindrance during the process of preparing a school district for change.

- Joe emphasized, “School has been there for a long period of time…sometimes I say we’re nomads.” He continues to warn us that
change doesn’t happen overnight “you need to take some time to get to know your staff [and] how you got to where you are today.”

- Joe explained that education of the past began as one-room schoolhouses; thus, continuing to function in the present as a “series of one-room schoolhouses.”
- Joe considers communication difficult within a school structure; it is challenging to get everyone together at the same time.

**Dr. Karl.** During the interview, Dr. Karl referred to principal support as a hindrance when creating readiness for change in the district. Also, Dr. Karl identified *trust; belief that change is not necessary; change is not feasible, and fear of personal failure* as possible reasons this strategy hinders creating change. Data from the interview are stated below.

**Trust.** Trust was seen as a hindrance to preparing a school district for change.

- Dr. Karl considers Value Added a “difficult measure to celebrate.” He explained, “You can’t see the formula, they [teachers] can’t see the formula, they don’t trust the formula, there is much about that data that doesn’t make sense to them.”

**Belief that change is not necessary.** The belief that change is not necessary manifested as a hindrance to preparing a school district for change.

- Dr. Karl explained, “When it’s mandated, it’s much more difficult to implement because you’re questioning why you are even implementing that change to begin with.”
*Change is not feasible.* Change is not feasible emerged as a hindrance to preparing a school district for change.

- Dr. Karl explained, “Planning and getting the system right and monitoring…is the tough part. Often nobody does it. It’s hard work.

- Dr. Karl reminds us that good procedures, protocols, and processes are important. If these are not included, Dr. Karl believes that moral issues will begin and the changes are not sustainable.

*Fear of personal failure.* The fear of personal failure is seen as a hindrance to preparing a school district for change.

- Dr. Karl explained Value-Added was published with one year of data. Then, it was used as a valued measure this year. He felt this might not have been a good idea. His opinion is in reference to OTES and the possible use of the growth measures as 50% of a teacher’s summative assessment.

- Dr. Karl believes time should be provided for teachers to review data. If not, it [analyzing data] becomes overwhelming.

*Dr. Jeff.* During the interview, Dr. Jeff shared several examples of hindrances for the strategy of principal support as it relates to readiness for change. He discussed a hindrance of this strategy resulting in stakeholder resistance to change. Also, Dr. Jeff identified *trust; not feasible, too costly to implement; afraid of failure* as possible reasons this strategy hinders the ability to create change. Data from the interview are stated below.
Trust. Trust is seen as a hindrance to preparing a school district for change.

- Dr. Jeff remembers changes in the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind. Dr. Jeff mentioned that a decision for kids with an IEP was made to not be part of the accountability piece on the report card. So, he communicated that message to his Board of Education and community. Then, the students counted as a subgroup on the Report Card.

- Dr. Jeff shared a model of the K-3 accountability piece as it had been presented to him in Columbus to his community. He was able to ease the community’s mind because he was in Columbus the day of the presentation. However, the accountability piece conflicted with the presentations received in Columbus of “don’t worry about the K-3 data piece”.

Change is not feasible. Change is not feasible manifested as a hindrance to preparing a school district for change.

- Dr. Jeff discussed guidelines for Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) of subgroups in reading and math. He explained previously the AYP goal was set at 100% of students in all subgroups will score proficient or higher on the state assessments. Jeff wondered if that goal was attainable.

- Dr. Jeff mentioned two mandates, testing and OTES, have staff stressed.
Fear of personal failure. Fear of personal failure was considered a hindrance to preparing a school district for change.

- Dr. Jeff shared a conversation about his data meetings. One of his principals told him that “she hated those meetings, I felt like you were just shinning a light on me, they [meetings] were so hard].”

Finding nine: Patterns and outliers. Several patterns emerged during the analysis of data for hindrances in the area of principal support. First of all, this section is broken into four smaller elements (i.e., trust, change is not necessary, change is not feasible, and fear of personal failure) for organizational purposes. The patterns that emerged for principal support during the data analysis process of this study are explained below.

Dr. Karl experienced all four elements of Principal Support. Wanda, Joe, and Dr. Jeff experienced three of the four elements of Principal Support listed. Joe, Dr. Karl and Dr. Jeff all referred to trust during the interview. Trust was experienced as hindering to the change process. Wanda, Joe, and Dr. Karl discussed the element of trust as a hindrance to change. All four informers, Wanda, Joe, Dr. Karl, and Dr. Jeff, experienced the element of change – not being feasible. The four informers spoke of the element as hindering the process of change.

Finding ten: Discrepancy as a hindrance. Discrepancy, disconfirmation, or the need to establish validation, is a process of identifying a gap between the current state of an organization and desired goals of the organization. Discrepancy or establishing why is
also a reason for, purpose of, or a validation process; consequently, the need to establish validation is also disconfirmation.

The hindrance of finding or acknowledging a discrepancy, or disconfirmation, is intra-disconfirmation which happens within the company as well as inter-disconfirmation which happens outside the company between two organizations (i.e., state and local educational organizations). Two entities acknowledging a gap between two versions – a perceived version and the desired version of an initiative /mandate would be an example of inter-disconfirmation.

All informers experienced hindrances when identifying gaps in current circumstances and intended purposes, goals or visions or experienced establishing the why for a mandate or initiative. The data collected and analyzed during the study revealed Wanda, Joe, Dr. Karl and Dr. Jeff explicitly or implicitly discussed disconfirmation or the need to establish why as a component impacting the ability to create a culture of readiness for change at his or her school district. Patterns for this theme emerged during the data analysis process of the study. However, during the interviews each superintendent communicated their own unique perspective and examples of disconfirmation. Findings from each interview are found below.

**Wanda.** During the interview, Wanda shared several examples of the cultural readiness component of hindering discrepancies or difficulties communicating the why of a change through examples. Wanda first shared implementation of the EMIS mandate, a system that transmits data files to the state as an inter-disconfirmation. The
superintendent explained the mandate as “a needed change.” However, the
disconfirmation or gap is in communication of the selling point.

- Wanda explains that it is difficult to communicate why EMIS is
  needed to the educational community. “The parents don’t understand
  [EMIS].”
- Wanda shared that EMIS is hard to sell because it is a mandate you
  won’t see the immediate impact in the classroom. Wanda emphasized
  that a selling point could not sound like “Oh, this is going to impact
  the success of our students in the classroom”.

An additional hindrance discussed during the interview was with the Ohio
Teachers Evaluation System. Wanda implied gaps existed between the current effects of
OTES on the climate at the district level verses state intended or desired effects or results.
Wanda also shared an additional hindrance existing with OTES. For compliance reasons,
some resources have been redirected to meet OTES mandates; thus, causing a
misalignment of resources with the overall district vision.

- Wanda shared that resources were redirected to meet OTES mandated
  requirements; thus, moving resources from classrooms.
- Wanda added that the new evaluation system negatively affected her
  teachers.
- Wanda emphasized that a high percentage (less than 10%) of the
  assessed student population opted-out of the PARCC assessments.
Wanda inferred the opt-out in her district was because student scores from the assessments are now used for teacher evaluations.

- Wanda stressed, “Let us evaluate teachers based on the real work; let’s not add that growth piece in for a couple of years.”

Wanda also named College Credit Plus (CCP) as an additional external mandate. She mentioned both positive and negatives regarding this mandate. She believes a gap exists in funding of the mandate or the communication piece regarding the vision of funding for CCP at the state level verses the implementation of the CCP mandate at the local level.

- Wanda stated that she had heard at a meeting the Governor mentioned that, “$50 million a semester is funding high school students across Ohio to have college credit”. Wanda also commented that the $50 million per semester is taken from the K-12 school funds and given to colleges and universities.

- Wanda shared that a belief of teachers is that with a new name there comes a “new initiative.” She also explained that not communicating an understanding is why we hear from teachers “Oh, why do we have to learn this?”

**Joe.** During the interview, Joe shared examples of hindrances, discrepancies (gaps) or difficulties communicating the *why* of a change initiative. Joe first shared an inter-disconfirmation hindrance in the intent and understanding of the District Report Card. The District Report Card is a yearly report produced by the state as a way of
communicating to stakeholders the effectiveness of education in each particular school
district. An additional hindrance identified was a lack of understanding the measurement
system used for the District Report Card. Below are some of Joe’s remarks.

- Joe proposed that the District Report Card is a moving target, constantly changing.
- Joe stressed, “There have been 20-27 different components over the years” all used as different measurements on the District Report Card.
- Joe’s district did quite well on the District Report Card. Joe announced, “If you ask me exactly how this happened [top scoring district on District Report Card] I cannot answer the question.”
- Joe stated, “I think we have a flawed measurement process right now….the system needs some adjustments.”

Joe also discussed an additional hindrance in the state assessments. A gap between the state intended use of assessments and the local stakeholder understanding of the use of assessments. Supporting answers from Joe’s interview are found below.

- Joe shared that the original purpose of the state for these assessments were to measure student achievement and growth.
- Joe reasoned, “They [parents] reacted, and we started seeing the opt-out issues….I think parents saw that [the assessments] as not measuring how well my student is doing or my child. You’re using this for the purpose of this [OTES].” Therefore, the parents began to opt-out their children from taking the test.
Joe described the historical change over time of various trends of testing in the state of Ohio. Joe emphasized, “that just shows that they just keep moving the target [the expectations] …The state report card has changed over the years of the things they measure”.

*Dr. Karl.* For Dr. Karl, discrepancy was a focal point throughout the interview. Dr. Karl uses a logic model for gap closure during disconfirmation to establish and communicate the *why* of change. Dr. Karl considers this a vital part of successful change. Related data from the interview questions are below.

- Dr. Karl explained “Sometimes we [educators] jump straight into implementation” of the change [skipping discrepancy].”

In addition, Dr. Karl identified a discrepancy in pacing. The state expected rate of implementing change and the practicality of implementing change that is sustainable at the local level are different. Dr. Karl also shared his experiences with internal pacing and discrepancies in regard to management of programs and people in regard to the readiness for staff to prepare for change. Dr. Jeff discussed this gap as it applies to change in general during the interview. Some of his statements are found below.

- Dr. Karl believes the staff must be provided time to analyze the data. The data can become overwhelming if time is not provided.
- Dr. Karl shared that sometimes he would remind administrators within the district to slow down the pace of change. He would announce to them, “You’re getting ahead of this [change], this makes all the sense
to you, you just came back from a professional development [training] session, and you need to get everybody else there [where you are].”

- Dr. Karl shared at times “you are so overwhelmed with being good soldiers and being compliant….We forget about good procedures, good protocols and processes.”

Lastly, Dr. Karl discussed discrepancy as it related to inter-disconfirmation and mandates. Dr. Karl speaks in general terms on how mandates affect the validation process of a mandate at the district level. Then, he speaks specifically of the District Report Card and OTES. Below are Dr. Karl’s thoughts shared during the interview.

- Dr. Karl believes with mandates come questions like “Why are we even implementing that change to begin with.” For this reason, Dr. Karl considers mandates to be much more difficult to implement.

- Dr. Karl explains that step one and two [preparing the system – understanding and communicating the why] are not “ours” when it is a mandate. So, they [step one and two] “don’t feel real, don’t feel authentic.”

- Dr. Karl also shared, “[When the State] used and published one year of growth data [teacher value added data]…. not a great idea.

**Dr. Jeff.** Dr. Jeff shared several examples of inter-disconfirmation in regards to how mandates are perceived in his district. Throughout the interview, Dr. Jeff concentrated many of his responses on the District Report Card and measuring success of
students. Some data gaps and disconfirmation processes from Dr. Jeff’s interview is below.

- Dr. Jeff spoke of changes in testing protocol. He shared that testing was changed for students with an IEP (individual Educational Plan). Dr. Jeff explained, “First we didn’t test student with IEPs; then, we started testing students with IEPs. What is communicated at the state level and what we receive at the local level is different.”

- Dr. Jeff believes a gap between the important things we do for kids and the by-product, the report card exists. He believes the District Report Card is not the focus of importance.

**Finding ten: Patterns and outliers.** Several patterns emerged during the data analysis process identifying discrepancy as a hindering strategy. First, all four informers, Wanda, Joe, Dr. Karl, and Dr. Jeff, indicated gaps in communicating an understanding regarding mandates (either ability to or lack of). Three informers, Wanda, Joe, and Dr. Karl discussed gaps relating to OTES that hindered the implementation of change. There are no outliers of importance to note.
Chapter Five: Summary, Findings, Implications and Recommendations

In Chapter Five the researcher presents an understanding of the research findings in relation to the research questions, scholarly literature and general interest of the study. Results are organized by research questions to justify thoroughness of responses. Results for each theme are interpreted and discusses in relation to the study. In addition, changes to future research pertaining to design, methodology, and data collection are recommended to strengthen meaningful results of the study. Lastly, questions or problems the researcher continues to ponder are also included in this chapter.

Summary

When it comes to educational reform and student achievement, most of us will readily agree that reform or change is needed. Where agreement usually ends, however, is how to reform education. Policy makers at the state and federal levels are convinced mandates and sanctions are the forces behind change. Scholarly researchers, however, maintain that change begins with organizational readiness. As all levels of government continue to direct fiscal resources toward school reform, scholars in the area of change research report that up to 70% of all new initiatives continue to fail (Beer & Nohria, 2000; Choi, 2011; Pelletiere, 2006; Smith, 2002; Soumyaja, Kamalanabhan, & Bhattacharyya, 2011).

No matter which type of organization a leader plans to transform, a plethora of change readiness literature exists. Despite the extensive amount of literature providing guidance on organizational change readiness, outcomes of change continue to result in high rates of failure (Burke, 2011). This study explored conditions of a climate and
strategies related to preparing school districts for change. The results of this study will be used by superintendents, organizational change agents, struggling and/or inexperienced leaders, non-profit organizational leaders, and governmental change agents when preparing organizations for change. The results of this study will add an additional dimension, organizational level, to the existing readiness literature for the K-12 setting. This study will enhance awareness of change readiness from the perspective of a superintendent as well as further the research on superintendents as change agents in relation to unfreezing culture within a school district.

According to Thompson and Hunt (1996) the implementation of organizational change is a black box. In other words, we continue to lack insight into the process of change. This includes the unfreezing process. However, the legislative body continues to drive educational advancements in Ohio using laws and mandates. With a better understanding of factors contributing to change readiness, leaders and educational teams can establish a course of action to improve the success rates of initiatives and mandates in educational organizations. With the findings from this study, legislators, Board of Education members, administrators, parents, and other educational stakeholders can make informed financial, political, and educational decisions regarding changes in policies and programs that affect school districts and influence education advancements across Ohio.

Scholarly research on external and internal forces of change was presented as a basis for this study. Furthermore, organizational survival and demise research exposed the connection between an organization and its environment. Since change happens to organizations, the researcher presented various change models containing different stages
used to deter resistance to change. The researcher emphasized Schein’s Change Model of Creating Motivation to Change (Schein, 2010) containing disconfirmation, survival anxiety, and psychological safety or learning anxiety. Next, an examination of a change message and the components of the change message as a social component of readiness at the organizational level was presented. Lastly, scholarly work on the three change strategies was presented.

This research is a qualitative descriptive study. A case study was used to explore the climate and strategies used by superintendents to prepare districts for change. The researcher served as the primary instrument to collect data during semi-structured interviews with the informers as well as to analyze the data. A purposeful selection of maximum variation, four superintendents, served as informers for this study. Two pilot interviews were conducted to finalize the interview protocols and/or questions used in this study.

**Findings**

Key findings emerged as a result of analyzing data gathered during interviews conducted with four informers. Maturation of data were met after collecting data from one interview with each of the four superintendents; therefore, no additional informers were interviewed and no additional data were collected. No additional documents were used in this study. The data were transcribed, manually coded, and analyzed for common themes and patterns using a multi-cycle process. The synthesized data were organized into themes and categories.
The findings presented in Chapter five are organized into three major themes: climate, supporting strategies, and hindering strategies. Ten categories emerged within these three themes. The ten categories include disconfirmation, a sense of urgency, psychological safety, active participation, pacing, staff support, and principal support (some categories emerged in multiple themes affecting the climate and/or support and hindering strategies.) The majority of informers identified all ten categories as relevant when preparing a school district for change readiness. One category, psychological safety, consisted of eight elements. Although informers identified all eight elements within the psychological safety category; no element was identified by all informers in this category. According to Schein (2010) all eight of the essential elements need to simultaneously exist for psychological safety to exist. Accordingly, psychological safety is partially supported by the group of informers. Furthermore, a majority of the informers identified several elements contained within the category of psychological safety; however, no informer unanimously identifies all elements of the category nor did the group of informers identify a majority of elements.

**Theme one: Conditions.** What conditions do superintendents feel are critical to the climate of a school district during the unfreezing phase of the change process?

- **Finding One:** Disconfirmation was identified by four informers as a critical condition for change readiness.
- **Finding Two:** Survival Anxiety was identified by three informers directly as a critical condition for change readiness. Survival Anxiety was identified indirectly by one superintendent.
• Finding Three: Psychological Safety was partially identified using eight components identified as important to create psychological safety. All eight components were identified by at least one informer.

Theme two: Supporting strategies. What strategies do superintendents in Ohio school districts identify as supporting the process of creating organizational change readiness? How are these strategies used to create organizational change readiness?

• Finding Four: Persuasive Message was identified as a supporting strategy by all informers through communication.
• Finding Five: Active Participation was identified as a supporting strategy by all informers by forming committees and teacher-teams.
• Finding Six: Pacing was identified as a supporting strategy by all informers imbedded in structure or communication to increase understanding or reflection.
• Finding Seven: Support for Staff was identified as a supporting strategy by three informers through communication giving permission to be innovative or to remain stable.
• Finding Eight: Discrepancy was identified by all informers as a supporting strategy used by data teams, teacher-based teams to identify gaps and other committees.

Theme three: Hindering strategies. What strategies do superintendents in Ohio school districts identify as hindering the process of creating organizational change readiness? How are these strategies used during the process?
• Finding Nine: Components of Principal Support was identified by all superintendents as hindering change readiness.

• Finding Ten: Discrepancy was identified by all superintendents as hindering change readiness.

Discussion of Findings

Question one. Various indicators are identified as characteristics essential to an organizational climate ready for change. This study relied heavily on the research of Schein’s (2010) readiness for change research, an expansion of Lewin’s (1947) three-phase change model and concentrated on the initial unfreezing stage of the readiness phase of change. The components in the readiness phase of Schein’s change model include: Disconfirmation, Survival Anxiety, and Psychological Safety or Learning Anxiety (Schein, 2010).

According to data from this study, superintendents participating in this study support all three conditions, disconfirmation, survival anxiety, and psychological safety or learning anxiety included in the readiness phase of Schein’s Model (2010). Findings of this study show disconfirmation is considered a critical climate condition by all four informers; survival anxiety is considered a critical condition by three informers; and psychological safety is partially supported as a condition by all four informers. Therefore, findings from this study support the theoretical framework of the study as well as previous change readiness research. The researcher agrees with the past research (Schein, 2010) and the findings of this study that disconfirmation, survival anxiety, and psychological safety are three supporting conditions crucial for preparing an
organizational for change readiness. The researcher also maintains that data from the current study warrant a need for two additional components to be added to the readiness phase of the change model. Although vision is an element of the component psychological safety, the researcher maintains it should be a separate component. The researcher also believes the data from this study supports the need for self-reflection as a fifth component of the readiness phase of a change model. All in all, according to data from this research, the first phase of a change model, the unfreezing phase, should consist of five components: the vision, disconfirmation, self-reflection, a sense of urgency, and psychological safety or learning anxiety.

Findings from this study support past scholarly research that organizations need to prepare a district for upcoming change (Armenakis & Frendenberger 1997; By, 2007; Chilenski et al., 2007; Chilton, 2010; Choi, 2011; Clark et al., 1997; Cunningham et al., 2002; Desplaces, 2005; Kwahk & Lee, 2008; Levesque et al., 2006). Initiatives, mandates and new programs are a large part of educational reform which aims to improve the quality of education in schools. As state, district and community entities continue to move fiscal resources toward supporting school reform, scholars in the area of change research continue to report a rate of up to 70% failure of all new initiatives (Beer & Nohria, 2000; Choi, 2011; Pelletiere, 2006; Smith, 2002; Soumyaja, Kamalanabhan, & Bhattacharyya, 2011). Thus, identifying gaps as well as understanding and communicating a need for change, the why, remains the first step to a successful change recipe.
Schein (2010) defines disconfirmation as receiving information to confirm a misalignment between a current state of the organization and organizational goals. Disconfirmation (a gap) or creating a belief that change is necessary is noted by several researchers (Armenakis & Frendenberger, 1997; Caldwell et al., 2009; Goh et al., 2006; Kwak & Lee, 2008; Madsen et al., 2005; Soumyaja et al., 2011; Walinga, 2008) as a key component of readiness. The patterns analyzed in this study revealed all four informers consider the process of identifying gaps or disconfirmation as a critical condition for change readiness. According to both Schein (2010) and all four superintendents in this study identifying a gap between where the organization is today (reality) and the ideal future state (goals or vision) is a crucial step in the unfreezing process of change.

The researcher agrees with Schein’s theory (2010) as well as the results of this study that change needs to align with a vision. At the same time the researcher maintains that identifying disconfirmation or a need to change within a district should be done early in the process. With that said, a point that needs to be emphasized is that disconfirmation is a process of identifying a gap between the current state of an organization and the future state of an organization. A gap cannot be identified without an image or vision of that future state for comparison purposes. Therefore, the organizational vision must be developed prior to the disconfirmation process. Data from the study corroborate the researcher’s view about developing a vision prior to disconfirmation. One informer, Wanda, believes that change needs to align with a vision. Although Wanda does not say so directly, she implies that a vision has been developed before the disconfirmation
process begins. Therefore, the unfreezing phase should contain an additional component (vision): vision, disconfirmation, sense of urgency, and psychological safety.

Previous studies have revealed knowing the why for change is an important element in creating change readiness in an organization (Barrett et al., 2005; Nixon, 2014). This study revealed Superintendents in Ohio public school districts believe that to create a change readiness climate their staff needs to know why change is needed. According to the data collected during the study, all four informers considered disconfirmation a climate condition critical for change readiness. This finding supports previous research on change readiness, specifically findings of disconfirmation by Nixon (2014). Interestingly, according to the data collected during the study, mandates introduced at the state or federal level appears to lose purpose or the why for change during the communication or the translation process between the entities or between the establishment of policy and procedures and the implementation process at the local level.

One unexpected finding pertaining to mandates implemented at the local level was collected on the importance of why change. The study revealed the purpose/need for the mandate, for change, may not be known or questioned during the implementation process between two entities (state/federal and local school district). The researcher maintains a colossal disconnect occurs between instituting a solution to educational problems (policies/mandates) and communication or applying solutions at the different levels (implementation/practice) of educational entities. The present findings convey a need for an additional component during the change readiness phase.
Some of the patterns for Finding One pertain to inter-disconfirmation (between two entities – originating outside of the organization) pertaining to mandates. The gap is between the intended use or effect of the mandate and the actual use, perception or effect of the mandate at the local level. External forces such as politics, regulations, and mandates, at times, push against units within the educational organizations and entities struggle. Drucker’s Theory of Business is extremely useful in these circumstances; because, this theory addresses the misalignment of an organization with its environment (1994). In other words, Drucker (1994) insists change is appropriate and necessary for an organizational-environmental fit.

All four informers support Drucker’s view that a fit between the school district and other entities, specifically state and federal levels instituting policies and local communities, is vital. All informers indicated gaps existed between intended use and actual perception or use of a mandate by district stakeholders. In addition, all superintendents identified inter-disconfirmational gaps, naming specific mandates, as conditions that affect change readiness in their district. Wanda, Joe, and Dr. Karl, specifically mentioned OTES as a mandate having a negative impact on change in his/her district. Each emphasized that this mandate negatively impacted their staff; thus, also adversely impacting change. According to Edmondson (1999), Payne (2012), as well as Baer and Frese (2003), a strong relationship exists between psychological safety and innovation; accordingly, innovation is related to change readiness (Damanpour, 1991).

According to Schein (2010) eight components need to be established simultaneously to achieve a climate of psychological safety. Data from this study reveal
partial support for psychological safety from all four informers. In other words, all four superintendents supported some of the components of psychological safety; however, no superintendents supported all eight components of psychological safety.

As previously mentioned, Wanda, Joe, and Dr. Karl experienced negative effects in their districts due to Teacher Evaluations. Accordingly, data from this study revealed that psychological safety was only partially supported in these three districts. Hence, the obvious explanation for a negative effect of the mandate, OTES, on staff in the three districts is underdevelopment of psychological safety hindering a change ready climate. In other words, the eight components of psychological safety were not effectively achieved simultaneously in those districts; the teachers did not feel safe to make changes without fear of consequences for failures. Although the use of maximum variation was applied when choosing informers for this study, the fact remains, a small number of superintendents and districts were included in this research. Therefore, caution should be applied to this conclusion. Additionally, patterns of disconfirmation or gaps indicate the possibility of a more extensive pattern. Surprisingly, inter-disconfirmation or a gap between a local school district and another entity was noted in several different instances with various mandates among all districts included in this study.

One example of inter-disconfirmation or a gap in policy and practice, the intended and actual effects of policy, happened only a few weeks ago. The researcher of this study gathered at the State Capital Building in Columbus with superintendents from across the state of Ohio. During a number of speeches superintendents referenced a misalignment between legislative mandates in education and student needs and/or the wishes of local
A need for different change is one implication of this unified message from Ohio superintendents. One specific mandate mentioned during the rally was a possible relaxing of current graduation requirements.

In recent debates related to student graduation, a controversial issue has been the lack of student preparation for college and the workplace. From this perspective, some argue preparing students beyond high school means setting higher graduation standards. On the other hand, however, others argue this change in graduation requirements (higher standards) puts up-to-half of the current seniors at risk of not receiving a high school diploma in a number of schools across Ohio. According to Burke (2008) change fails to occur because change leaders underestimate the impact of the external environment and internal transformational components. Obviously, this mandated change has some glitches.

A proponent of this view is Schein’s (2010) belief that an organization with a change readiness climate helps to facilitate a successful implementation of mandates and initiatives within the organization. A proponent of Drucker’s Theory of Business (1994) holds the belief that an organization and its environment need to fit one another. With this said, better communication and more frequent discussion concerning the implications of state and federal policy on local school districts (students, families, communities, and educators) needs to emerge. However, controversial policy does not stop with OTES and graduation requirements. The District Report Card, another federal and state policy, affects local school districts and stakeholders.
Joe, Dr. Karl and Dr. Jeff discussed gaps that render the District Report Card as an invalid measurement of district and student accomplishments. Three of the superintendents suggested several fundamental problems with the District Report Cards. Both Joe and Dr. Jeff referenced the constant changes pertaining to reporting measures; it is hard to be methodical and goal oriented if the target continues to move. On the other hand, Dr. Karl maintains that the Report Card holds information that school districts could find beneficial such as the student-level data tool. Using the student-level data at the district and building levels to identify any disconfirmation brings validation to the need for change.

Student-level data or results from mandated student assessment define much of the Report Card for school districts. In discussions with superintendents, there are multiple uses for the report card. However, it is important to know why or the purpose of the Report Card or change. Three informers, Wanda, Dr. Karl and Dr. Jeff, spoke of the importance of understanding and/or the ability to communicate why change is needed. Nixon’s (2014) qualitative study using focus groups supports the results of needing to know why for this study. Although this study used interviews and Nixon’s (2014) study used focus groups, both studies have similar results. Accordingly, this strengthens both studies.

If the report card is meant to serve as a document for communicating information to parents and community members, the researcher supports the view of the superintendents in this study that measures on the Report Card are not of sound reasoning and furthermore, the researcher argues that the report card measures are confusing. This
in turn, communicates an ambiguous description or misleading representation of student achievement and school improvement to parents and communities.

One such example of a misleading representation on the Report Card is the third grade reading guarantee indicator. If a school has 100 students in the first grade and four of those students are identified as not reading on grade level, ninety-six of the students are reading at or above grade level. The report card measure is based on the number of students moving from not on grade level to reading at grade level or above. Therefore, if two of those original four not on grade level students go to second grade reading at grade level (everything being the same), you now have ninety-eight percent of your students reading on grade level. However, the report card indicator is not based on the ninety-eight percent of the students who are now reading on grade level or above. The school or group of teachers only moved two of the four students not on grade level. Therefore, fifty percent of the students moved from not on grade level to reading on grade level or above. The school receives an “F” for this accomplishment as well as the status of two percent of the students reading not on grade level and ninety-eight percent of the students reading on grade level or above as a Third Grade Reading Guarantee Grade. This example is a simplified calculation. However, from this perspective, the researcher believes the Report Card has failed as a communication device for parents and community members. This is another example of an inter-disconfirmation or gap between the stakeholders of the local school district and state level mandated change. The why was lost during the interpretation of this mandate.
As a matter of fact, something has gone awry with many new initiatives and mandates in the past few years. Mandates and initiatives such as the Report Card, the PARCC assessments, the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System, and the Common Core Standards have become a tangled web during the past few years for school districts and policy makers. One example is the release of the Report Card last year with possibly incorrect data (some districts challenged the published data). The PARCC assessments have been replaced by AIR assessments. Laws for OTES have changed multiple times in the past few years. Language on the OTES rubric has changed. The Common Core Standards which were changed to the Ohio Learning Standards are now currently being revised. Beer, Eisenstate & Spector (1990) remind us that for organizational change to be successful either roles or attitudes can be changed, but, not both. Needless to say, these were major changes mandated to be implemented concurrently. These mandates brought change to both roles and attitudes.

Both Wanda and Joe recognized the student opt-out for state testing as an inter-disconfirmation or gap between purpose or intent and perception. Wanda reported that many of her parents decided to opt their students out of the PARCC assessments. Joe shared that his community felt the focus of testing had shifted from student achievement to teacher evaluations. Therefore, parents in his district elected to allow their students not to participate in state testing.

This discovery of a relationship between mandates and inter-disconfirmation affords support for the basis of an additional missing component in the unfreezing phase or readiness phase of change, self-examination. For instance, Burke (2008) suggests one
conduct a self-examination during the prelaunch or readiness phase during the change process. Self-examination is the process of reflecting on self and one’s values (Burke, 2008). The researcher uses this procedure often and applies this procedure during implementation of initiatives. If a gap had not previously been identified during the unfreezing phase of change, revisiting one’s values, then, comparing those values to the current state of the organization and desired state of the organization certainly reveals insightful information.

Survival Anxiety is another element of the change readiness phase. Schein (2010) defines survival anxiety as establishing the need to change. Survival anxiety is created through raising anxiety and feeling discomfort or through lowering anxiety and feeling passion for an initiative. According to past studies (Guhu, et al., 1997; and Kwahk & Lee, 2008), a sense of urgency is as antecedent to readiness for change in an organization. All informers in this study supported survival anxiety as a critical component of change readiness.

Four informers, Wanda, Joe, and Dr. Jeff, discussed survival anxiety as it applied to change readiness efforts in his or her district. Three informers, Wanda, Joe, and Dr. Jeff, express directly support for survival anxiety critical to create change readiness. These findings support prior research studies pertaining to survival anxiety (Burke, 2008; Guha, et al., 1997; Kwahk & Lee, 2008). One informer, Dr. Karl, indirectly supports the condition of survival anxiety by creating and communicating the understanding of the district vision which is supported by empirical research (Susanto, 2008).
Two superintendents, Wanda and Dr. Jeff, ascertain that feedback from the District Report Card creates a sense of urgency for staff due to the high expectations for academic achievement held by the school community. Additionally, Wanda and Dr. Jeff maintain educators apply pressure to one another regarding Report Card scores; thus, increasing anxiety and creating a sense of urgency. Previous research by Yukl (2010), that obvious threats will result in change readiness, corroborates these findings. Although using threat is not the chosen method of creating a sense of urgency, the researcher agrees with the superintendents as well as the previous research (Festinger, 1957; Schein, 2010; Yukl, 2010) that this method has been effective when preparing staff for change.

In addition, two superintendents (Joe and Dr. Karl) discuss emotions when addressing a sense of urgency. The data from this study show informers raise anxiety as well as lower anxiety as a way to develop a sense of urgency. Also, most of the superintendents see a sense of urgency as an antecedent of change readiness. The researcher uses approaches, raise survival anxiety and lower anxiety level, to create a sense of urgency when unfreezing culture and implementing change. This notion is supported by findings from this study as well as past scholarly research on survival anxiety (McLaughlin, 1990).

There are two outliers of importance to note. Dr. Karl implied urgency is established by creating a vision. This belief aligns with findings from Susanto’s (2008) study of organizational readiness for change. Susanto’s study (2008) revealed to create successful change lower survival anxiety. According to Schein (2010), developing a
vision is an activity used to create a climate where staff can feel safe. Feeling safe can lower anxiety. Also, during a mandated change, Joe mentioned although he may not necessarily endorse a mandate, he does not express to his staff negativity toward the mandate or change. Supporting a change effort is important for successful implementation. Support for an initiative or mandate is one of the Five Individual Change Beliefs (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Armenakis, et al., 2007).

Psychological safety is defined as safe to take risks without fear of consequences (Edmondson, 1999; Payne, 2012). Your staff’s ability to feel safe to be innovative without fear of retaliation is psychological safety. According to a study of forty-seven companies (Baer and Frese, 2003), a climate of psychological safety is positively related to company performance and innovation.

All four informers partially supported psychological safety as a condition critical for change readiness. There are eight conditions necessary for staff members to feel safe to take risks in the workplace or to lower learning anxiety (vision, formal training, staff involvement in training, informal training in teams, support for the change, positive role model, support groups, systems and supports aligned with the vision). Schein (2010) designates the eight conditions as activities needed to create psychological safety. Data were gathered from interviews regarding creating psychological safety in a district. Patterns emerged during the analysis of the data around this category and patterns emerged.
All eight components for psychological safety were used by zero informers. However, all four informers used multiple psychological safety components in his or her district. Patterns indicated the following activities were used by three informers creating psychological safety; thus, encouraging employees to take risks without the fear of retaliation: create a vision, provide formal training, provide resources and feedback, model expectations, provide staff informal support groups, and align support structures and systems with the organizational vision. According to the data from the study involving the learner in training was the only component used only once. This component was used by Wanda.

Patterns emerged for Finding Three during the analysis process in five of the eight components for creating psychological safety in the workplace. Three superintendents, Wanda, Dr. Karl, and Dr. Jeff, discussed vision as well as the component of Resources/Feedback/Coaching as part of creating psychological safety for staff. This was accomplished through systems such as teacher-based-teams, the Ohio Improvement process and communication. Superintendents also discussed the component positive role model. Superintendents believe frequent visits and communication exposes the staff to positive role models. The three superintendents, Joe, Dr. Karl, and Dr. Jeff, felt this component also contributed to creating an environment where staff feels safe to take risks. These results are in agreement with the ideas of Schein (2010).

**Question two and three.** Questions two and three generated a total of five key findings. Bandura (1977) as well as Fishbein and Azjen (1975) identify two influence strategies, persuasive communication and active participation. Patterns emerged in this
study that mirrored use of persuasive communication and active participation. The additional three supporting strategies identified were pacing, support for staff, and discrepancy; these were additional strategies that emerged during the data analysis process.

According to the study, superintendents use persuasive communication as a supporting strategy to prepare a district for change. This finding further supports the idea of Bandura (1977) as well as Fishbein and Azjen (1975) who identify persuasive communication as an influence change strategy. According to Armenakis et al., (1993), communication includes two components, discrepancy and efficacy. Findings from a previous study show quality communication correlates with change readiness (Soumaja et al., 2011). However, in a study by Bouckenooghe (2008), results show only partial support for a correlation between communication and change readiness. Patterns in this study revealed all informers used persuasive messages to communicate discrepancies and to inform or educate stakeholders. One informer used persuasive communication to directly impact a staff member’s job performance. All four informers, Wanda, Joe, Dr. Karl and Dr. Jeff, identified persuasive communication as a supporting strategy used in his or her district to prepare the district for change.

Dr. Jeff used persuasive communication when sharing student accomplishments with the School Board. For example, Dr. Jeff described rather than reported data from the District Report Card; he presented and validated kids’ accomplishments to the School Board. The data collected during the study indicates that this superintendent advocates
for social justice and focuses on doing the right thing for kids. Therefore, the researcher is not surprised Dr. Jeff finds a fair and just way to present student achievement.

Two components are included in persuasive communication, discrepancy and efficacy (Armenakis et al., 1993). Dr. Karl described the process his team uses to develop and deliver common, consistent talking points at the exact same time to guarantee an accurate message across the district. Newsletters, meetings (face-to-face), and staff were used to communicate the persuasive message. Of the two components, data revealed Dr. Karl’s team focused on one of the two components of persuasive communication, discrepancy.

Wanda, however, used both components of persuasive communication when communicating change to her staff. Wanda used the strategy of persuasive communication to focus on teacher efficacy. She highlighted staff in a weekly newsletter; thus, supporting and encouraging innovation. Neves (2009), Kwahk and Lee (2008) and Rafferty et al., (2013) conducted studies resulting in self-efficacy as the determining factor of change readiness. Wanda reported that the teachers relied on the newsletter and the article highlighting a staff member was well-liked. This data aligns with results from the three previous studies.

Active participation can be used to gain input as well as actively engaging stakeholders in change. Results from a study support active participation as an indicator of change readiness (Eby et al., 2000; McKay et al.). Therefore, active participation is one strategy superintendents can use to prepare a district for change readiness. Patterns for this strategy, active participation, were found during the data analysis process.
Patterns analyzed during this study revealed that all four informers discussed active participation as a supporting strategy used to prepare his or her district for change. However, a study by Bouckenooghe (2008) of fifty-three Belgium organizations found no correlation between participation and change readiness.

All four informers, Wanda, Joe, Dr. Karl and Dr. Jeff, formed either teams or stakeholder committees to actively engage stakeholders in the decision-making process and gain input from participants. The results of this study correspond with results obtained by Eby et al., (2000), Hetkamp (2012), and McKay et al., (2012) as well as corroborate the idea of Chemers (1997); this data validates that a leader enlists the aid of others. The researcher supports this type of distributive leadership approach and uses the approach often during change initiatives.

Two superintendents, Wanda and Dr. Jeff, used active participation to identify key players to gain input as part of this strategy. This result is significant in two phases of change. The finding supports previous research noting a positive correlation between active participation and lower resistance to change (Coch and French, 1948) as well as (Kotter, 1995) forming a powerful coalition which is a component of the second stage in preparing for change.

In addition, three superintendents, Wanda, Joe and Dr. Jeff, used active participation as a strategy to create a sense of ownership. In each instance something was created (i.e., rubric, program, or plan); thus, actively engaging the participant. The researcher agrees with the finding that active participation creates a sense of ownership.
An additional support strategy, pacing, emerged during this study. Forces in the external environment of organizations are discontinuous (Burke, 2008); therefore, it is necessary for a school district to react to environmental forces in a timely manner (Stadtlander, 2006; Susanto, 2008). Pacing is one strategy superintendents identified as supporting change readiness. All four superintendents discussed this strategy during his or her interview. The pacing strategy was analyzing as it applied to change readiness.

First, all four informers identified pacing as supporting his or her district in preparing for change. Three informers, Wanda, Dr. Karl and Dr. Jeff, used pacing during the change process to improve the implementation of a mandate, initiative or training. All superintendents, however, used pacing in ways unique to their own style. This supports one of the eight components of psychological safety (Schein, 2010) needed to create a climate of readiness. For example, Wanda used pacing during the district training structure to enhance hands-on practice, in-depth understanding and feedback for the staff. One superintendent, Joe, used the method to reflect on past practices.

Superintendents support this strategy as important when preparing a staff for change. Providing support for staff is a component of Psychological safety (Schein, 2010). Three informers used this strategy to support the process of preparing his or her district for change.

Wanda, Joe, and Dr. Jeff identified a strategy, supporting staff, as one he or she used to prepare the district for change. Two superintendents support staff by “giving permission” and encouraged the staff to be innovative; thus, giving staff permission to try new ideas. This data confirms the association between innovations, support for staff, and
change readiness previously identified during previous empirical research by (Damanpour, 1991). This strategy interconnects with survival anxiety or the need to lower anxiety which in turn increases readiness for change (Susanto, 2008).

Yet, one superintendent used the supporting strategy to “give permission” differently. Kotter (1996; 1999) has offered harsh criticisms of organizational leaders who allow too much complacency. However, one superintendent gave support to a transitional teachers by permitting the teacher to “remain stable” (i.e., retirement) rather than to make the change; thus, preventing resistance. The researcher has observed this strategy, permitting a teacher to remain stable, practiced successfully by superintendents during implementation of a mandate or initiative. As individual cases arise, such as a retirement at the end of the year, the researcher weighs the potential benefits and the potential damages that may occur as a result of the decision.

Discrepancy, disconfirmation, or the need for validation is a process of identifying a gap between the current state of an organization and desired goals of the organization. Disconfirming is many times thought of as establishing why. The need to establish why is also thought of as the reason for, purpose of, or a validation process; consequently, the need to establish validation is disconfirmation.

Change begins and ends with the environment (Burke, 2008). Therefore, we must constantly test the Business Theory for our organization (Drucker 1994). In other words, school districts need to remain in balance with the environment. The strategy of identifying a discrepancy, disconfirmation or a gap can be intra-disconfirmation (happen within the organization or school district) or inter-disconfirmation (happen between two
organizations or entities – i.e., state and local educational organizations). The strategy of establishing a gap between the actual use and the perceived use or of an initiative or mandate is an inter-disconfirming strategy.

All informers experienced disconfirming or identification of gaps in current circumstances and intended purposes, goals or visions within their districts or experienced the need to establish why for a mandate or initiative at the district level. These results are consistent with the idea of Katz and Kahn (1978). The data collected and analyzed during the study revealed Wanda, Joe, Dr. Karl and Dr. Jeff explicitly or implicitly discussed disconfirmation or the need to establish why as a strategy to prepare for change at his or her school district. These results consistent with previous data collected in a previous study (Nixon, 2014).

All four informers, Wanda, Joe, Dr. Karl, and Dr. Jeff, gathered teachers and formed teams to identify discrepancies in district data. Dr. Karl’s district analyzed data, specifically growth data points. Three superintendents assembled staff for the purpose of additional conversations after identifying discrepancies. Two informers, Wanda and Dr. Jeff, discussed establishing why for change initiatives and mandates in the teacher-based-teams. These ideas are in line with Schein’s (2010) empirical research that if disconfirming validation of data can decrease denial and defensiveness; thus, inspiring the individual to develop new habits.

**Question four and five.** The four superintendents the researcher chose for this study contributed to change locally as well as regionally or at a state level. Therefore, it is no surprise that one superintendent said, “Hindrance is a harsh word” when asked
about strategies hindering the process of preparing his/her district for change. For that reason, hindrances were indirectly identified during conversations throughout the interviews with the informers. The key findings hindering strategies include Principal Support and Discrepancy.

The implementations for these findings are important; because, studies of organizations indicate that many change efforts fail to meet expectations (Burke, 2011; Yukl, 2010). In addition, resistance is a common occurrence during periods of change in an organization; furthermore, there are a number of reasons why people resist change (Yukl, 2010). This study revealed several patterns hindering change readiness in a school district.

Patterns emerged for principal support as a hindering strategy when preparing a district for change. Principal support is the degree an organization or the organization’s leaders support a change initiative (Armenakis et al., 2007). According to a previous study (Rafferty et al., 2013) perceived organizational support is considered a factor in change readiness. Therefore, principal support is a strategy superintendents could use to support change initiative or mandates in a school district. In other words, positive energy can assist in avoiding any resistance to change in an organization. All though principal support did not merit its own file as a supporting strategy during analysis, the strategy emerges as a hindrance to change efforts during the data analysis process. Therefore, when negative energy is created rather than positive support for an initiative, principal support (or creating positive attitudes) becomes hindered and change readiness efforts lose momentum.
Four components emerged under results for principal support during the data analysis process. These four components were trust, belief that change is not necessary, belief change is not feasible, and fear of personal failure. All four superintendents identified the feasibility of change as a hindrance. These four components are major reasons for people to resist change (Yukl, 2010).

Trust was identified by three informers, Joe, Dr. Karl, and Dr. Jeff, as an issue regarding previous mandates. Three of those superintendents identified measurements of data used on the District Report Card as topics of trust. Furthermore, two informers directly connect the Report Card data concerns with OTES concerns. Three informers, Wanda, Joe, and Dr. Karl, identified the strategy of change not being necessary as a perception held by some stakeholders within his or her district. Therefore, the three superintendents consider it a hindering strategy in preparing the district for change. Furthermore, all three informers used one or more mandates when discussing the hindrance of change as not being necessary.

All four informers spoke of changes not being feasible in his or her district. Three superintendents, Joe, Dr. Karl and Dr. Jeff, discussed feasibility of success for an initiative as a hindrance due to procedures and processes. Lastly, three informers, Wanda, Dr. Karl and Mr. Jeff, identified fear of personal failure as a hindrance for change readiness.

Discrepancy, disconfirmation, or the need to establish validation, is a process of identifying a gap between the current state of an organization and desired goals of the organization. Disconfirmation (a gap) or creating a belief that change is necessary is
noted by several researchers (Armenakis & Frenkenberger, 1997; Caldwell et al., 2009; Goh et al., 2006; Kwahk & Lee, 2008; Madsen et al., 2005; Soumyaja et al., 2011; Walinga, 2008) as a key component of readiness. Discrepancy or establishing *why* is also a reason for, purpose of, or a validation process; consequently, the need to establish validation is also disconfirmation. In a study by Nixon (2014), group members revealed “having a need to know why change is occurring” (p.502) as an important factor in change readiness.

The hindrance of finding or acknowledging a discrepancy, or disconfirmation, can be intra-disconfirmation – happen within the company as well as inter-disconfirmation – happen outside the company between two organizations (i.e., state and local educational organizations). Hindrance of both entities acknowledging a gap between the perceived version or use and the desired version or use of an initiative or mandate would be an example of an inter-disconfirming strategy. The patterns from the data gathered and analyzed in this study revealed superintendents believe disconfirmation is an important component of the readiness for change climate.

All informers experienced hindrances in establishing gaps in current circumstances and intended purposes, goals or visions and establishing *why* for a mandate or initiative. The data collected and analyzed during the study revealed Wanda, Joe, Dr. Karl and Dr. Jeff explicitly or implicitly discussed disconfirmation or the need to establish *why* as a component impacting the ability to create a culture of readiness for change at his or her school district. Patterns for this theme emerged during data analysis. However, during the interviews each superintendent communicated his or her own unique
perspective and examples of disconfirmation. Wanda shared several examples of the cultural readiness component of hindering discrepancies or difficulties communicating the *why* change through examples. For example, Wanda shared an implementation of EMIS, a system that transmits data files to the state. The superintendent explained the mandate as “a needed change.” However, the disconfirmation or gap is around communicating the need or selling point for the program.

Patterns emerged during the analysis process for Discrepancy hindrances. Four informers, Wanda, Joe, Dr. Karl, and Dr. Jeff, indicated gaps in concerning communicating and understanding (either ability to or lack of). Three informers, Wanda, Joe, and Dr. Karl, discussed gaps relating to OTES that hindered the implementation of change. First, all four informers indicated gaps between intended and actual perception and use of the mandate by district stakeholders existed in a number of mandates. Wanda, Joe, and Dr. Karl discussed gaps that hindered the implementation of the Ohio Teachers Evaluation system (OTES). Joe, Dr. Karl and Dr. Jeff discussed gaps that hindered the validation process of the District Report Card with constituents. However, Dr. Karl stated that some elements of the District Report Card enhance and validate the intended use of the document. He uses the document as a student-level data tool. Mandated assessments were addressed by both Wanda and Joe; thus, leading to student opt-outs for state testing. Lastly a gap between the state-level expected pace and the actual pace for implementing as hindering the mandates at the district level were identified by Wanda, Dr. Karl, and Dr. Jeff.
Wanda, Dr. Karl and Dr. Jeff all agreed that understanding and/or communicating the *why* for needing to change is necessary when creating a climate for change readiness. Wanda, Dr. Karl, and Dr. Jeff also agreed using data-based decisions or data teams to identify gaps (or to gain new information) is an essential part of disconfirmation or validating a need for change; thus, important to the climate of change readiness. Joe also inferred data teams in his district gather to analyze data. Also, such teams as building teams and teacher teams review student scores to reflect on practices.

There was one outlier of importance to note. Wanda mentioned change should be tied to the district vision. Schein (2010) also agreed with this idea. For this reason, he assigns “develop systems and structures aligned to the organizational vision” as a change readiness strategy.

**Conclusion**

**Implications for action:** The findings from this study have cause to convey various insights to several groups of people. Three particular recommendations of interest are highlighted below.

**Revised change readiness phase (five components).** One of the more significant findings to emerge from the study is the work contributing to the theoretical framework for this study, Schein’s (2010) change model, specifically the readiness phase or unfreezing phase. The unfreezing phase components of Schein’s (2010) change model include: disconfirmation, sense of urgency, and psychological safety. The findings of this study enhanced our understanding to include two additional components, vision and self-examination, as part of the unfreezing phase.
Close the inter-disconfirmation gap – state and federal level. Legislation is regulating educational policies and programing at an accelerated speed; because of this, it is necessary for school districts to react to these environmental forces in a timely manner (Stadtlander, 2006; Susanto, 2008). This study makes a noteworthy contribution to policy makers. It is also important for policy makers to understand the importance of change readiness as well as the importance of communicating the need for change to stakeholders implementing mandates. The researcher mentioned several mandates implemented and within a few years have disappeared or are continuing to experience major revisions. Policy makers need to develop a process that includes self-reflection and/or self-examination. Reflecting on one’s motives and values (Burke, 2008) would be an insightful process for leaders.

Close the inter-disconfirmation gap – local level. School district and community members accept numerous mandates without probing to gain answers to many questions. Part of that inter-disconfirmation is acceptance of an inter-agency communication gap (the why of the mandate). A compounding effect is a gap in preparing stakeholders for a change that is not “ours”, may not fit into our local educational vision, nor can be envisioned by our stakeholders as beneficial for our students (EMIS). Change readiness is the crucial element that causes change to be successful in an organization (Armenakis & Frendenberger, 1997; By, 2007; Chilenski, Greenberg, & Feinberg, 2007; Chilton, 2010; Choi, 2011; Clark et al., 1997; Cunningham, Woodward, Shannon, MacIntosh, Lendrum, Rosenbloom, & Brown, 2002; Desplaces, 2005; Kwahk, & Lee, 2008; Levesque, Prochaska, Dewart, Hamby, & Weeks, 2001; Pellettiere, 2006).
All four informer discussed mandates throughout their interview. Each informer conveyed throughout the study difficulties preparing his or her district due to mandates. Superintendents mentioned hindrances in relation to mandates as being a lack of trust, belief that change is not needed, lack of understanding of the change, lack of ability to communicate an understanding of the change or need for change, lack of fiscal or resources to support the change, possess incomplete information in regard to change, media distributes change message before the superintendents have a complete understanding or thorough knowledge of the change. Along the same lines with these findings, Yukl (2010) lists two of these hindrances listed, lack of trust and belief that change is not needed, as reasons why people resist change. Taken together, these findings suggest a role for the local school district and community to advocate for better communication from the state and national policy makers the need for the mandates, or the why.

*Ensure the creation of psychological safety.* Psychological safety is defined as a person’s perception of being able to safely take interpersonal risks in the workplace without fear of consequences (Edmondson, 1999; Payne, 2012). To create this safe environment, eight specific activities should be conducted simultaneously. The eight activities include: create and articulate a vision; provide formal training; involve learners in training; provide informal training in groups or teams; provide practice, coaches or feedback; provide positive role models; provide support groups; and align systems and structures consistent with vision (Schein, 2010).
Results from this study revealed none of the informers facilitated all eight activities within his or her district to create a climate of Psychological Safety. Therefore, school districts should direct fiscal resources and energy to ensure these activities are available for new initiatives. The school should also ensure a monitoring system is constructed and utilized to maintain a climate of psychological safety.

The presence of this type of readiness climate helps to facilitate the change process (Schein, 2010); thus, assisting with reform and the implementation of mandates and initiatives is important. All elements of psychological safety are important to creating a readiness climate in the organization (Schein, 2010). Since no superintendent supported all elements of this condition in his or her district, further research should be conducted in this area. Maximum variation was applied to the group of superintendents interviewed. Although the current study is based on a small number of superintendents, the findings offer implications of practice. In terms of future research, further work could include a larger group of informers with a focus on superintendent preparation programs and preparedness to create a psychologically safe climate.

**Manage external sources for validation of change.** Management of external sources is an opportunity for superintendents to use media to support their cause through communication or a message. This type of support can add credibility to a change message (Armenakis et al., 1993). External sources bring confirmation and believability to information (Gist, 1987) in a superintendent’s message. Data from this study revealed superintendents use media sources such as newspapers and social media to disperse
information and district events. However, none of the informers specifically discussed using media sources to validate initiatives or for preparing his or her district for change.

Burke (2008) maintains that convincing communication is important when preparing staff for change. Hence, School Districts should develop a pro-active media plan to approach new initiatives and changes before or at the beginning of the change cycle. Basic templates can be made to model talking points for new initiatives and change initiatives in general. This document can assist with transparency and assist in extending efforts to gain validation for initiatives from sources outside the school district. Also, research reveals open communication of top leaders contributes to readiness (Guha et al., 1997). Therefore, this communication idea assists with the readiness factor for the district. This idea also works between two entities (in action step one) such as the local school district and state or federal level.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

*Theoretical research for new change model.* Future work needs to be completed to validate the additional two components as critical elements of a change readiness climate. The theoretical framework for this study is based on Schein’s (2010) change model, specifically the readiness phase or unfreezing phase. The unfreezing phase components of Schein’s (2010) change model include: disconfirmation, sense of urgency, and psychological safety. The findings of this study enhanced our understanding to include two additional components, vision and self-examination, as part of the unfreezing phase.
Explore psychological safety. Psychological safety is defined as safe to take risks without fear of consequences (Edmondson, 1999; Payne, 2012). For a superintendent in a district, it is the way the staff perceives themselves as safe or free to be creative without worrying about the possibility of punishment. To create readiness for change, psychological safety should be increased. According to a study of forty-seven companies (Baer & Frese, 2003), a climate of psychological safety is positively related to company performance and innovation. However, psychological safety in this study was only partially supported. In this study, none of the four informers facilitated all of the activities when preparing his or her district climate for change. Out of eight activities, one superintendent conducts seven activities; two superintendents conduct five activities; and one superintendent conducts four activities. An additional study to focus on the eight activities needed to create a climate of psychological safety is recommended. The researcher also recommends correlating the eight activities to the level of psychological safety as perceived by the staff or administrators.

Explore management of external sources. Management of external sources is an opportunity for superintendents to use media to support their communication or message. This type of support can add credibility to a change message (Armenakis et al., 1993). Use of media in this way can extend a message into the community spanning the boundaries of the building.

Media such as radio and/or local television can serve as a source of media to broadcast information regarding current educational issues (Armenakis et al., 1993). These external sources bring confirmation and believability to information (Gist, 1987) in
a superintendent’s change message. Throughout the study, our superintendents were faced with difficult situations involving lack of communication, lack of understanding, or late receiving communication from another outside entity. Management of media sources to enhance and validate change efforts could assist in making initiatives successful. However, this same source without management can make the change efforts fail.

Although the informers in the study used communication as a vehicle to provide information to the community, the data did not reveal patterns for management of communication as it applied to change efforts. Therefore, it is recommended that an additional study be conducted to focus on Management of External Sources and include a larger population sample of Superintendents.

**Summary**

Initiatives continue to come and go in Ohio. An example of this is our last recent change from the PARC assessment to the AIR assessment. The latest news is a change in the Ohio revised Standards (which included the Common Core Standards) to “give us your input on the changes we made in the standards using this survey”. Therefore, it is imperative that an educator is prepared for change every day. The environment around educators is shifting constantly.

The Readiness phase of Schein’s Model of Motivation to change (disconfirmation, survival anxiety and psychological safety) has been considered an essential precursor for essential change. Individual change beliefs and social dynamics of communicating a change message in a systematic and systemic way at the organizational
level has leaders grasping for models and framework, setting goals and deploying systems for monitoring fidelity of implementation.

Results of this study for Theme One revealed disconfirmation is considered a critical climate condition by all four informers. Survival anxiety is considered a critical condition by three informers. Psychological safety is partially supported as a condition critical for change readiness by all four informers; none of the components for psychological safety were used by all informers at his or her district.

Results from this study for Theme Two revealed all four informers identified persuasive communication, active participation, pacing and discrepancy as supporting strategies used in his or her district to prepare the district for change. In addition, persuasive communication was used to convey discrepancy; active participation was used to gain information and create a sense of ownership; pacing was used to encourage innovation or stabilize a transitional environment; and discrepancy was used in data groups when analyzing data (i.e., student data) and to identify gaps. Three (3) informers identified supporting staff as a strategy encourage innovation.

Data from this research revealed personal support and discrepancy as hindering strategies. Personal support had four components: Trust, change is not necessary, and fears of personal failure were all supported as a hindering strategy by three informers; change is not feasible was supported by four informers. The last hindrance was discrepancy. The study revealed all four informers found discrepancy as a hindering strategy to his or her district.
Generally speaking, success of reform for education should remain a concern for all – politicians, educators, parents, community members and students alike. Past studies in the area of educational reform indicate a positive relationship between organizational readiness for change and the successful implementation of initiatives or organizational change (Armenakis, Harris & Mossholder, 1993). Future research needs to continue to push educational readiness to new horizons. Our organizations cannot wait for tomorrow; today is the day for change.
References


from


